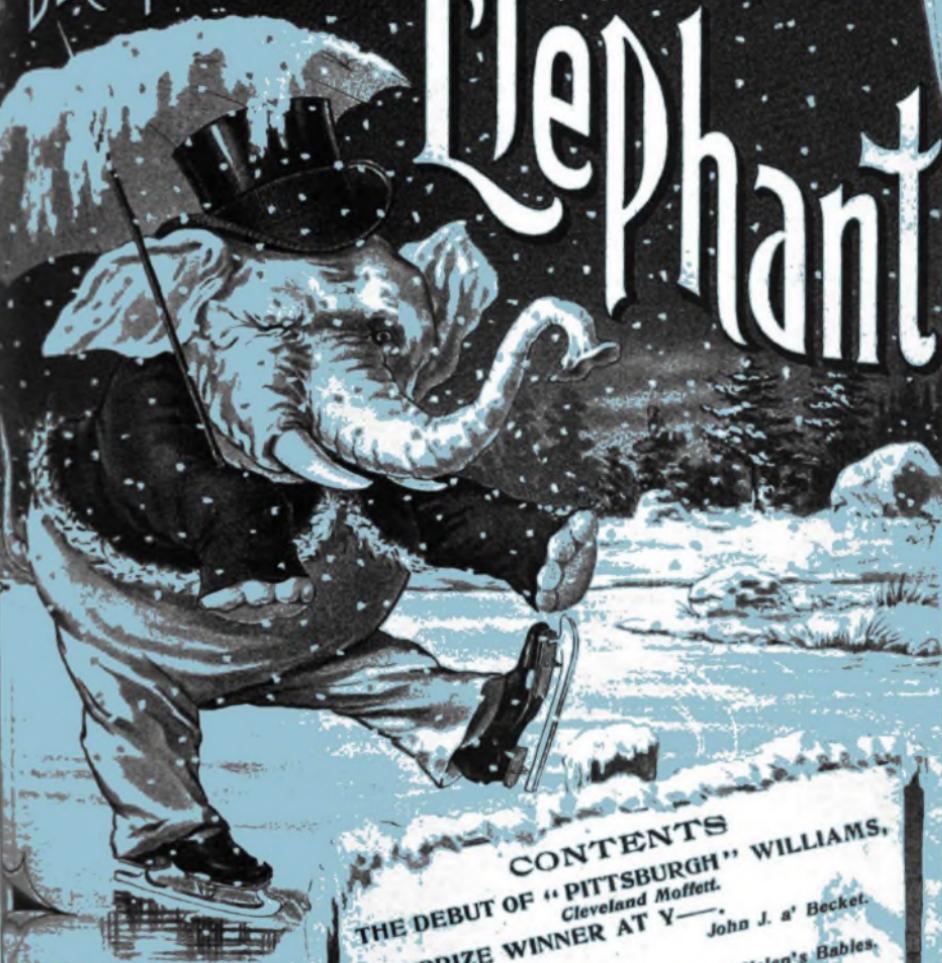


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THE White Elephant



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ROOM "99."

BY FRANCIS WORCESTER DOUGHTY.



UST as there are old forgotten churches in New York, located in by streets, whose very names are known only to those immediately interested, so there are old-time hotels, once popular resorts and familiar to every one, but now far beyond the range of public recollection, and kept in existence only by the patronage of certain persons, whose peculiar interests wed them to the house.

Such a hotel, until quite recently, flourished on a prominent down-town street just off Broadway. Dry goods buyers would go there and nowhere else. The uninitiated wondered how the house could possibly maintain its existence, and yet it flourished, until one day the buyers, for some unexplained reason, suddenly began to give it the cold shoulder. That settled its fate. The house was pulled down, but it was only a type of many others, not a few of which are still in existence. One must be entirely familiar with New York, to know and recognize them. Persons thoroughly acquainted with all the ins and outs of the metropolis, are growing scarcer day by day, and it is doubtful if a dozen could be found, without special reasons for knowing, who ever

heard of Benson's Hotel, for many years the favorite resort of schooner captains and stone men, whose business interests lay with the marble and granite yards at Corlear's Hook.

Yet until recently Benson's Hotel did a flourishing business on lower Jackson street, ground since cleared to make room for the Corlear's Hook Park.

All around it were tenements of the lower class, but on its immediate block a few of the old Quaker families still resided with here and there some prosperous German or Irish contractor sandwiched in between them. In those days Benson's Hotel was full every night with a line of guests who, if not laying claim to "Style," certainly had plenty of money to spend.

Late on one raw November day several years ago, Dr. Willard Wylde, a young M. D., who had just passed his matriculation, while riding from Port Jervis to New York on the Erie Railroad chanced to overhear some strange statements in relation to Benson's Hotel.

He was seated in the smoking-car, half asleep, with his head against the window and his hat pulled down over his eyes, when the train stopped at Middletown, and a stout, prosperous-looking man, evidently a drummer, entered the car and claimed acquaintance with the gentlemen in the seat directly in front of Dr. Wylde.

"What brought me up here?" Wylde overheard him say, in response to his friend's question after the first cordial greetings had been exchanged. "Why, I've been to the Middletown Insane Asylum to see poor Randall."

"Indeed," was the reply. "Is he any better?"

"No; nor never will be."

"Still raving about the lady with the green hair?"

"Just the same. Mysterious, ain't it?"

"Very, as I understand the story."

"Wonder if you know it as it really is?"

"Can't say. Heard he went on a terrible toot, was missing for weeks and finally turned up stark mad, and able to talk about nothing but this mysterious female with the green hair."

"You're dead wrong, my dear fellow. Randall, hadn't drank a drop in a year, and I know it. He had the misfortune to occupy room 99 at Benson's Hotel last May. I understand no one has ever occupied it since."

"And what may that mean?"

"Let me explain; that room is at the bottom of the whole business. For the last three years as many as six men who have occupied it have disappeared mysteriously during the night, in every instance their baggage being found undisturbed in the morning, not a thing missing but the lodger, who never in any instance, except in the case of Randall, has been seen or heard of again. It took the proprietor some time to grasp the situation, for months would elapse between these mysterious disappearances, and at first it was supposed that the missing man had simply made off for reasons of his own, though just how it is hard to determine, for I understand the door was always found locked on the inside, and the only window in the room is rather too high for a jump; but the hotel people know it now, and, as I said before, since poor Randall was found wandering about the streets mad, no one has ever been allowed to sleep in room 99, and I very much doubt if anyone ever will again."

Now to all this and more—for the conversation did not end here—Dr. Wylde listened with close attention.

The drummer's strange story produced on his mind a most powerful impression.

Willard Wylde loved mystery better than he loved the profession he had chosen, which, truth told, he did not love at all. Possessed of ample means, and under no necessity to practice, this young man had preferred the pen to scalpel and medicine chest. Perhaps he was a literary genius—at least, he thought so, for he had already written two novels—tales of mystery—published at his own expense, and was now at work on a third.

Mystery! It was Willard Wylde's pet word. A mysterious room in a hotel—a real mystery! The very thing! It must be investigated—it should be, and at once.

Then and there Dr. Wylde resolved to sleep in Room 99, Benson's Hotel, that very night.

He had to look in a directory to find the house, when the ferry boat landed him in New York, for he had never heard of it before, and when he found that it was located on lower Jackson street he had to look in the back of the big book to find where that was, for Jackson street was to him as much an unknown quantity as Benson's Hotel.

But Dr. Wylde saw other streets on the East Side of New York that evening, the very names of which were strange to him, before he reached his destination; for fatigued with sitting in the cars and being unincumbered with other baggage than a

small grip, he undertook to walk to Benson's, going through the notorious "Polish Jew Quarter," by way of Canal street to its junction with Jefferson, and thence by way of Monroe street to Jackson, where he found the house without difficulty, being guided by the bright light which burned above the door.

Dr. Wylde was one of those quiet, self-centered, determined young men who having once taken a resolve, never for an instant entertain the thought of retreat.

He paused in front of the hotel only long enough to take in its surroundings, the chill November wind sweeping bleakly up from the East river as he looked.

Certainly there was nothing mysterious or forbidding in the appearance of Benson's Hotel, which stood about midway on the block between two old fashioned brick houses, seemingly still occupied by private families. Alongside the door of the house toward the river was a doctor's sign. By the light of the hotel lamp Wylde read the name, Dr. Klix, the usual designation of office hours being below. On the corner beyond was a drug store, and directly opposite a livery stable with several tumble-down frame buildings on either side.

Such was the general appearance of the block. The hotel was decidedly the brightest spot upon it, and when Wylde entered and walked up to the desk he found that it was brighter inside than without, for a crackling wood fire burning in an open hearth, around which a number of plain, but substantial looking guests sat smoking, talking and reading, gave the office a decidedly home-like look, and this more particularly since this room and those which opened off from it, writing room, billiard room and bar were well kept and scrupulously clean.

"Can I have a room here to-night, sir?" asked Wylde, placing his grip on the counter.

"Certainly," replied the clerk. "Will you register?"

Wylde wrote a name in the big book. "I would like room 99 if you could let me have it," he quietly said.

The clerk shot a curious glance at him.

"Why do you ask for that particular room?" he inquired.

"A friend of mine who recommended me here occupied it two years ago. He told me it was a good room."

"Sorry, sir, 99 is engaged. I can give you 98, right opposite. Exactly the same kind of room."

"I should prefer 99."

"For any particular reason?"

"The reason I have named."

"You might ask the proprietor. I can't give it to you."

Wylde saw that he had reached the end of his rope. To ask the proprietor after having been thus emphatically refused by the clerk would be pretty certain to force him to show his hand—precisely what he did not propose to do.

"Oh, very well; it makes no difference," he said, carelessly. "Show me to 98."

It was now half-past eight o'clock. Wylde washed up, left his grip in the room, and went down into the restaurant on the first floor and ordered supper, which surprised him by proving uncommonly good.

At half-past nine he was back in 98 again, where he sat reading until midnight—reading and listening, waiting for the house to quiet down for the night, and as determined as ever to sleep in no room but 99.

Another hour passed. The house was quiet now. The lodger in 96 had long since retired; 94 appeared to be unoccupied, and no one had passed along the corridor since half-past eleven.

"Now is about my time," murmured Wylde, closing his book. "I think I will make a move on 99. Probably I shan't succeed in getting in, and if that's the case I'll stay here to-morrow night and try it again."

He softly opened his door, listened for a moment, and then stepped across the corridor, and still more softly tried the door of room 99.

It was locked, but the fastening seemed to be of the cheapest description, for the door rattled as he shook it. Wylde slipped back into his room, and took from his grip a piece of wire, which he used to clean the briar pipe, to which he was devoted. Bending this and applying it to the keyhole, he soon mastered the lock, threw back the door, and found himself looking into room 99, dimly illuminated by the moonlight which stole in through the window.

There was nothing unusual in the room; in fact, it was the very twin brother of 98, with its single bed, bureau, chair and washstand. The only difference was the window, which opened just beyond the rear wall of the adjoining house, and overlooked the river. As Wylde glanced out, he could see the lights on the Brooklyn shore, with a Williamsburgh ferryboat heading up stream for its slip at the foot of Broadway.

"This is all right. I stay here," thought the young man.

"No one need ever know it, and my curiosity may be gratified, although I doubt it, but at least I shall have the satisfaction of having humored my fancy, whether anything comes of it or not."

Again he returned to 98, put out the gas and brought over his grip, umbrella, hat and overcoat. Then lighting the gas in 99 but leaving it turned low, he shot the bolt on the inside of the door and threw himself on the bed, not to sleep, but to await for developments. Such at least was his intention and for perhaps an hour he faithfully adhered to it, part of the time on the bed and then when the sleepy fit came pacing the floor, then throwing himself on the bed again, which last he did once too often, for the drowsy god caught him when he least expected it. He never knew that he had lost himself until he was suddenly aroused by three sharp, distinct raps.

Wylde started up to find himself staring at a figure standing beside the bed.

A woman—a woman in white, young, of tall, symmetrical figure, a face surpassingly beautiful in its molding, and such hair—such astonishing hair!

It was a yellowish-green shade seen in that dim light, and had a curious sheen about it—Wylde could think of nothing but corn-silk as he gazed, half stupefied—of that and the ravings of poor Randall as described by his friend. The words flashed back upon his memory :

"Still raving about the lady with the green hair."

Wylde tried to pull his wits together to get up to say something, but her eyes were fixed upon him, and for his life he could not have removed his gaze from those eyes of hers, which seemed to shine like two lurid flames between the folds of that wondrous hair, brought down over the forehead and ears in a style strange enough then, but decidedly *a la mode* now.

"Come!" she whispered. "Come! You must come! Dr. Wylde, get up off that bed and follow me!"

Was it hypnotism?

That or something closely akin to it must have influenced Willard Wylde then.

She glided backward between the window and the bed with both hands outstretched toward him, and Wylde simply arose and followed her—followed through an opening in the wall the full size of an ordinary door, which he had not seen when he examined the room.

He knew he was doing it—he remembered everything—the

story of the mysterious disappearances in this room was uppermost in his mind as he did it. And yet he did it just the same and without the power to utter a word.

The instant he crossed the threshold the figure vanished and all was darkness. The spell was broken, but too late for a retreat. The panel behind him closed with a snap. Wylde heard it, but before he could turn he was suddenly pushed forward into a blaze of light.

Utterly confounded, Wylde just stood and stared.

He was standing, surrounded by iron bars which reached above his head, looking between them into what appeared to be a chemist's laboratory, with its crucibles and mutes, its flasks, beakers and bottles, all so familiar to him in his student days.

Just beyond the bars was a long bench, beside which stood an elderly man, with gray whiskers and bald shiny head, wearing a greasy dressing-gown, and busily shaking an orange colored liquid in a flask over an alcohol lamp. His back was turned to Wylde, and he seemed intent upon his work and wholly oblivious to the young man's presence, until suddenly placing the flask in a rest, he turned and faced the prisoner behind the bars.

And such a face! Cold, hard, stern, unyielding, not one soft line of sympathy upon it. German, perhaps; foreign certainly, but the voice spoke good English, when it said:

"Good-evening, doctor. I presume you are somewhat disturbed to find yourself in my laboratory. I am busy for the moment, working down this solution of bi-chromate of manganese. Just amuse yourself by trying to escape, until I am through. They all have to do it, and you may as well get through with it at once."

To do justice to Wylde's feelings, as this strange being turned from him, and again taking the flask in his hand, began shaking it over the flame, would be to attempt the impossible. Enough to say that his coolness did not desert him, now that the baleful influence of those terrible eyes was removed from him, Wylde's will was all his own.

"I have already tried the wall behind me," he quietly said. "If it is not made of iron it is of something just as hard; as for this cage I presume whoever made it intended that it should be secure."

"You are right," replied the old man without looking around. "Just a moment, doctor, and I will attend to your case; the precipitate is falling and it is necessary for me to watch the method

of crystallization. There! It is done. Now then, my friend! First, who am I?"

"Not knowing, I couldn't say," replied Wylde with the same studied calmness; "but may I ask how you know me?"

"Assuredly. I don't know you. I read your name on your grip in room 99. You chose to paint Dr. before it, so I assume that you *are* a doctor, of what I neither know nor care. It may be medicine, law, divinity, horses or corns, it is all one to me, you will serve my purpose just as well."

"And that purpose?"

"Young man, you are cool. Usually I have to deal with prayers, pleadings, terror, rage—"

"Enough. Come to the point, please!" broke in Wylde. "I know all about the disappearances in room 99. I undertook to investigate this mysterious business, and I seem likely to succeed; be good enough to explain as quickly as possible what your purpose is."

"My purpose," replied the old man, fixing his cold eyes upon Wylde, "is to investigate you."

"Your explanation explains nothing. Who are you?"

"To another I should not answer, but your frankness demands its equivalent. Look at me. I am Klix—the great Klix."

"Ah! The doctor next door. I saw your sign."

The old man stamped his foot in rage. "Saw my sign!" he roared. "Ha! And this is fame! Surely you can be no doctor. I am Klix—Klix, on the brain!"

"Stop! I remember! A dry German work in six volumes dated forty years back! You wrote that?"

"I did. It is my work. It is the only complete treatise on the brain ever published. Swedenborg's ponderous tome is mere child's prattle in comparison. Huxley—"

"Never mind about Huxley. Dr. Klix, I have heard of your work, but I never read it and probably never shall. Go on."

The old man gave a contemptuous sniff.

"It is not for such as you," he said, "but still I like you. I'm glad you have come. You are different from the others; to vivisect the brain of a coward, a fool, a drunkard or one afflicted with any other form of mental weakness is something I have already tried many times, but yours will be different. In your case I may succeed in finding the seat of the *ego*, the thinking principle, in other words, what fools and fanatics term the soul."

"Ha, my friend!" he continued, as Wylde stared at him be-

tween the bars, "your face pales and well it may. Know your fate ! I want the upper half of both hemispheres of your cerebrum ! I have immediate use for them, to work up material for the sixty-second chapter of my coming work on the human brain now approaching completion. I presume you will offer no objection to parting with this slice of your anatomy. If you are really a doctor you must know that should the operation be skillfully performed you will still live ; muscular power will still remain to you ; your intelligence will be sufficient to enable you to perform the offices of nature, to eat, sleep, find your way from one place to another and things of that sort. In short you will stand about on the plane of a well preserved idiot. You will become an animal, and all in the interest of science. One thing more ; I shall administer no anæsthetic—such is not my purpose. I can best study your cerebrum in a state of high mental excitement ; such a state as you are rapidly approaching now as you stand there with your eyes starting out of your head with horror grasping those bars which will not yield. Come ! Come ! Come to the operating table ! The sooner the better ! Come now !"

Higher and higher grew the pitch of his voice as he pronounced these concluding words.

He had not over described the sensations of his victim.

Horror uncontrollable had seized Wylde at last. He shook the bars and shouted out one frantic appeal for mercy—a despairing cry for help.

Useless ! He knew it too.

He felt that he was dealing with a madman—an enthusiast—a crank.

"That's right—that's right ! Work yourself up !" cried Dr. Klix. "Beautiful ! Do it again ! Shout once more !"

At the same instant he stamped his foot violently upon the floor, and a sudden and overpowering electric current shot through poor Wylde, racking him from head to foot, and reducing him to a state of entire unconsciousness. When a sense of his surroundings returned he lay strapped down upon an operating table, with the doctor standing beside a small stand upon which a lamp with a powerful reflector had been placed, the light striking full upon Wylde's cranium. By the side of the lamp lay numerous glittering instruments—knives of curious shapes, scissors, probes, etc., the uses of which the young physician knew only too well.

Wylde stared at all this dumbly. He could not speak.

But Dr. Klix could and did.

"So you have come to life again!" he began. "Good! You yielded to the shock beautifully. No kicking, no struggles—that's the animal—you are a man. The last one I had out of 99 made me no end of trouble. He even refused to die after I was through with him, so I let him go after his head was healed. I may let you go, or I may keep you here in this house to study the effect of my operation, or you may die. It really makes little difference which."

Then as Wylde did not respond, he went on :

"Before I begin and you lose your higher consciousness, let me satisfy your curiosity about that room. The Benson House was formerly a factory; it was altered into its present shape some years ago. I don't know who built that secret door, nor why, but I happened to find it, and I have utilized it to furnish me with living subjects. That, doctor, is the full explanation of the mystery of room 99."

It was explanation enough for Wylde. All chance of escape seemed to have passed, and as the young man lay there much of the horror of his desperate situation seemed to have left him. He found himself unable to think of it. He could scarcely follow Dr. Klix as he rattled on; his mind wandered back to his boyhood days; scenes and faces long forgotten seemed to flit before him; the room seemed filled with people, and among them his bewildered brain showed him the faces of many who had long been dead.

Now the doctor ceased to speak, and turned to the bench where Wylde had first seen him. Again the alcohol lamp was lighted, and a large flask containing a colorless liquid was placed in the rest.

For a moment Dr. Klix watched its ebullition and then seemingly satisfied turned his face toward Wylde and began to talk.

"The time has come," he said. "As soon as that flask thoroughly boils I shall proceed to the operation. The extraction of your cerebrum will be reserved until the last; my first move will be to examine the posterior corner of the lateral ventrical. Have no fear. I am able to perform this operation with perfect safety; you will surely recover from its effects. I am the creator of the great truth that the hippocampus minor is not peculiar to man as formerly taught. It was I who explained to Professor Huxley—heavens! It boils already—more than boils! What carelessness! I——"

He had seized the flask and attempted to raise it from the flames, but too late!

In the midst of his self-satisfied reflections the flask exploded; its contents broke into flame and scattered right and left.

With a cry of profound agony Dr. Klix clapped his hands to his face and dropped like a stone, while Wylde, with staring eyes and wildly beating heart saw the floor, the bench, the heavy curtains at the windows and the clothing of the fallen man burst into a blaze.

At the same instant a scream rang out; the door flew open and "the lady with the green hair" burst into the room.

"Father! Father!" she shouted. "Dead! Thank God! The day of this evil house is done!"

So much Wylde heard, so much he saw but no more, for in the same moment the break came.

Faint, or swoon—call it what you will—he knew no more until he found himself lying on a lounge in the back room behind the prescription desk at the corner drug store, with several men around him.

"He's all right," said one, as he opened his eyes; "something falling from the burning house must have struck him."

"By the way," said another, "did you hear if Miss Klix got out all safe?"

"Certainly she did," was the reply; "but the old doctor must have been dead before his daughter got into the room after the explosion—at least, she thinks so, but she had no time to investigate; it was all she could do to get out alive."

Had she time to take him from the operating table and drag him to the street?

Dr. Wylde always thought so, but he never knew, for he never saw "the lady with the green hair" afterward—never heard of her—never wants to.

When at last he left the drug store, having told a story according with the remark he overheard, he pushed his way through the crowd, with one hasty glance at the ruined house of Dr. Klix.

The Benson House was scorched, and the guests badly scared, and the next day it was reported in the papers that one of them was missing, the name given being the fictitious one Wylde had signed to the register.

But Wylde never explained; he never even returned to claim his grip and let the clerk know that he still lived. He felt no further interest in the Benson House. He had solved the mystery of "Room 99."

The Debut of "Pittsburgh" Williams.

BY CLEVELAND MOFFETT.



R. STANLEY RUSSELL, the millionaire proprietor of the New York *Chronicle*, was in his private office one afternoon, busy with some papers, when the boy brought in word that Mr. Williams wished to see him.

"Who is Mr. Williams?" he asked.

"Why, he's a new reporter, sir," said the boy.

"Can't he see the managing editor?" said Mr. Russell.

"No sir, he says it's something very important, and he's got to see you."

"Very well, let him come in," said the newspaper magnate, thereby establishing an unusual precedent, and sending a buzz of comment among the group of reporters lounging outside in the City Department.

"I wonder what that kid wants to see the chief about," said one of the men.

"'Pittsburgh' has got his nerve with him," said another. "I suppose he is going to ask the boss to take him off emergency duty and give him a raise from \$18.00 to \$20.00 a week."

There was a general laugh at this sally, for the speakers were all space men who earned from \$40.00 to \$60.00 a week, and naturally looked down on this young "colt" who had recently emerged from the smoky surroundings of 'Pittsburgh', (the city that gave him his nickname,) into the highly charged atmosphere of Park Row.

"I'll lay drinks for the crowd that he comes out of that room within three minutes," said one of the star reporters, looking at his watch.

"I'll go you," said another, and for the next few minutes they sat with eyes fixed on the door of the great man's sanctum, which, contrary to all expectations, remained closed.

* * * * *

"Well, Williams," said Mr. Russell, as he saw before him a tall young man wearing glasses, "what is it?"

The reporter hesitated a little, and then said :

"I have an idea, sir, for a sensation, something out of the common—a sort of a fake, I suppose, but it might be a big thing."

"What kind of a fake?"

"An execution fake?"

"What?"

"It's a scheme, sir, to beat the other newspapers in getting some poor devil executed. One of the Philadelphia papers did it five years ago when that nigger Johnson was hanged at Harrisburg, and they 'scooped' everybody. Don't you remember it?"

"No," said Mr. Russell, amused at Williams' audacity. "Sit down and tell me about it."

"Why, the day before the hanging was to take place the *Universe* man arranged with the murderer and the sheriff to have the execution come off four hours ahead of the appointed time. Then he wrote up the story, and had it on the wire before the other newspaper men had reached the jail. The result was that the *Universe* scored a clean beat on the city."

"But how in the world did he persuade the sheriff and the condemned man to consent to such a change?"

"Very easily. A few drinks and some smooth talk fixed the sheriff, who did not mind advancing the hour so long as Johnson was willing. Then the reporter went to Johnson and convinced him that, as he had to die anyhow, it didn't matter much when the hanging took place. The difference of a few hours couldn't harm him any, while it might do a lot of good to his family. The reporter agreed to give Johnson a hundred dollars in cash for his wife, and to pay for all the man could eat and drink before he was executed. Johnson thought it all over and decided that the offer was too good to throw away, so he told them to get ready the rope and bring on their champagne, chicken salad and pie. By the time he came to be hanged he was stuffed so full of all kinds of things that he hardly felt it."

"And you wish me to go in for something of this sort?" asked Mr. Russell.

"No," said Williams, "my idea is an improvement, not an imitation. The scheme I have in mind is quite unique, and will make a stunning sensation, that is, if I am able to carry it out, for it will take some money."

"Well, let me hear your idea," said the *Chronicle's* proprietor, whose curiosity was becoming aroused.

"You know, sir, this murderer, Munsheimer, is to be electrocuted next week at Sing Sing. The case was the talk of the country for weeks. It was one of the most brutal murders on record, the mother and little child, you remember, up in Westchester County. Fiend though he is, Munsheimer is a man of brains and will look favorably, I think, on a plan that will postpone his execution for perhaps a week and result in financial advantage to his daughter, who is the only human being he cares anything about. I propose to fake up a brother for Munsheimer and then work the old scheme of an escape by means of a change of clothes, a false beard, etc. That will postpone the execution until such time as we are ready to have it come off, and the *Chronicle* will have an exclusive story."

Mr. Russell frowned. "You would be blocking the wheels of justice, Mr. Williams, and performing a criminal act. Do you suppose I would for one moment consider aiding a murderer to escape from prison?"

"You don't quite get my idea, sir," said Williams, and then, talking very fast and with increasing confidence, he went into an explanation that caused Mr. Russell, when he finally understood it, to purse his lips into a long whistle of astonishment.

"And do you really think such a scheme can be carried through?" he asked.

"I am sure it can, sir, if you will get me the passes to the prison and furnish money to pay this French doctor. You know his charges are pretty high."

"Oh, there will be no trouble about that," said the newspaper autocrat, and then coming to one of those quick decisions for which he was famous, he added: "You may go ahead on these lines, Williams, and report to me personally from day to day."

An hour later Williams was in the office of Dr. Mazagrin, a queer little Frenchman who lived on Waverly Place. His specialty was the making of death masks, artificial noses, etc., and it was his boast that he could work such a transformation in any man that not even his own wife would know him. He accomplished this by building upon the client's face false features of wax or plaster so perfectly concealed by means of a secret preparation, a sort of enamel, that there was no possibility of immediate detection.

"I want you to get up a face for this man that will make him look like some other man," said Williams, producing one of Munsheimer's photographs.

"Vaire ees zee ozaire man?" asked the Doctor.

"Any other man will do, pick out the one you want. You and he will have to go up to Sing Sing together to see your dear relative, who is a murderer. You'll be his uncle, and the man you're going to hire will be his brother. See?"

"Thees ees a vaire peculaire case," remarked the Doctor, whereupon Williams produced a large roll of bills, and the Frenchman's hesitation was disposed of forthwith.

* * * * *

The day of the execution came, and in the city of Sing Sing there was great excitement. Although none save a favored few could witness the final act in the tragedy, the streets about the prison were crowded with people from the surrounding district and even from a distance, who had gathered for the mere satisfaction of seeing the black flag shoot up from the death chamber at the moment when the deadly current was turned on.

The hour came and passed, but no black flag appeared. Presently messengers were seen hurrying from the prison to the telegraph office, and in a few minutes the exciting news spread from group to group, that Munsheimer had escaped and another man had been substituted for him. The wires carried this news all over the country, and within a few hours extras were out in many cities, detailing under flaring headlines the most extraordinary conspiracy to evade justice that had been known in years. Enterprising correspondents described minutely how, on the morning of the execution, the condemned man had, through special influence, been allowed to receive a last visit from his brother, and how he had disguised himself in the clothes and false beard of the latter, and made his escape a few hours before the fatal moment.

The discovery had been made only when the jailers entered the murderer's cell to prepare him for the chair; then it was seen at once that the man who had been intrusted to their custody was gone, and that another man was there in his stead. There was no possible doubt that a change had been made; this was apparent at a glance, and the prisoner himself admitted as much, declaring that he was Munsheimer's brother, that he had worn a false beard on his visits to the prison, that his brother had put on this beard as well as his clothes, and had thus been able to leave the prison without exciting suspicion. It was evident

that the escape had been planned and executed with masterly skill.

Wide discussion followed in the newspapers as to the proper disposition to be made of the brother, who had thus sacrificed his freedom to save his brother's life. Legal opinions differed as to the precise nature of his crime, and as to the charge which should be brought against him. It was clear, however, that he could not be sentenced to more than a few years' imprisonment, and the ends of justice were plainly baffled. It is true the police of New York City declared that they would soon capture the escaped Munsheimer, and made wise announcements of clews that could not fail to deliver him into their hands. It all ended, however, in talk, and after a four or five days' sensation, the subject was dropped.

On the sixth day after the escape, the warden of Sing Sing Prison received a visit from a young man, who said he had come on urgent business.

"I have a proposition to make to you, sir, that may relieve you of a grave responsibility."

"And what is that, please?" asked the warden.

"I am in a position to give valuable information about the murderer Munsheimer. Before I make any statement, however, I wish to furnish you with proper credentials as to my responsibility, and to exact from you the formal pledge that, whether you agree to my terms or not, the subject of my visit shall remain an absolute secret between us two. In other words, if you refuse to accept my terms, I leave this room without interference, and matters remain exactly as they are at present."

After some hesitation, and after reading a strong letter of introduction from a man of great influence in New York City—no less a person, in fact, than the Chief of Police—the warden agreed to the stranger's terms.

"Very well, sir," said the young man. "My mission is to prove to you that the murderer Munsheimer can be captured. In other words, I know where he is."

The warden looked up incredulously and shook his head.

"It is hardly likely, sir, that you know more than the entire police force of New York City."

"Not likely, I admit, but true, nevertheless. I can prove to you that I know where Munsheimer is and can insure his capture. And I will do this if you will consent to a very simple condition."

"Name your condition."

"It is that after Munsheimer is delivered into your hands, the execution take place without loss of time, and that no one, except myself and the necessary officials, be informed of the fact. Of course, I must also insist that absolute secrecy be preserved as to my connection with the case, and that no effort be made to discover my identity or to investigate my motives. You may imagine what you please, but you must know nothing, and must remain as silent as the tomb."

After an hour's argument and thought, the warden finally consented to the young man's condition. There seemed to be nothing else for him to do.

"I know, sir, that you are a man of honor," said the stranger, "and now that you have pledged me your word, I am sure you will keep it."

"I will keep it," said the warden. "Now tell me where Munsheimer is."

"Before I do that, I desire to put a few questions to his brother. I must ask you to have him brought here."

The warden touched an electric bell and instructed the keeper who answered the summons to bring the murderer's brother into his private office. A little later the prisoner stood before them, looking from one to the other with something of uneasiness in his glance, something of dogged defiance.

"Do you know where your brother is?" said the stranger, addressing the prisoner.

The latter remained silent.

"Answer the gentleman," said the warden, sharply.

"Yes, I know where he is."

"And do you refuse to tell us where he is?"

"Certainly I do," said the prisoner, smiling contemptuously at the question. The stranger drew himself up to his full height, which was over six feet, and adjusting his glasses, said impressively:

"And yet the fact is, strange as it may seem, that within two minutes of this moment you will be perfectly willing to tell us everything."

The prisoner started in surprise, and the warden looked at the young man as if he had taken leave of his senses.

"I know what I am doing, sir. Have you a penknife with a sharp blade?"

"I have this one," said the warden.

With the utmost deliberation the young man opened the knife, ran his thumb along the edge, and then said quietly: "Thanks, I think that will do."

Then, stepping toward the prisoner, with a quick movement he made an incision lightly along the bridge of his nose and drew away in two fragments a wax mask that had been adjusted with wonderful art over the man's face.

"There, now look for yourself. Do you recognize Munsheimer, the murderer?"

In speechless amazement the warden beheld the transformation wrought under his very eyes. The man who had entered the room had a prominent nose, with downward curve; the man who stood there now had a flat nose turned up at the end. The man who came in, had a strongly marked chin and jaw, while the one they were now looking at, had rather a weak lower face. There was no possibility of doubt, the man before them was Munsheimer himself, the genuine murderer.

"Are you really the murderer Munsheimer?" asked the warden, so astonished that he forgot to be severe.

"I am, sir," answered the man.

"But your voice is not the same as Munsheimer's; he spoke in gruff tones, while your voice is high pitched. How is that?"

"Do you see this mark on my neck?" asked the prisoner, plainly delighted with the success of his masquerading. "There are two of them—one on either side, and they mark the point where a hyperdermic injection of some very unpleasant stuff was given me on the morning of my escape. That was a good joke on you, Mr. Warden."

The man pointed to two slight punctures of the skin just beneath the line of the collar, and exactly over the vocal cords. Then he continued: "After I received these injections my voice was strangely affected, and has remained shrill ever since. The man who gave me the injections said that their effect would last about ten days. You would have been surprised to find my voice changed back to its normal gruffness if you had waited two or three days longer."

"Who was the man who gave you these injections?—and why did he do it?"

"I have no more idea about that than you have. He came with my brother and said he was my uncle, but I will swear I never had an uncle, so he must have been mistaken. Between you and me, I never had a brother either."

Munsheimer chuckled to himself at this attempt at humor.

" Why did you let him do this to you ? "

" What did I care. I was going to die anyhow within a few hours, and I thought I might as well give somebody a little pleasure before making my exit. The gentleman said he would consider it a special favor if I would submit to his experiments, so I submitted."

" And did he put on the false nose and false chin you have been wearing ? "

" Yes, he was very much interested in altering my physiognomy. I'm sure I don't know why, but it seemed to amuse him and I had no objections. Besides that, it gave me the satisfaction of making fools of the amiable gentlemen who have kept me locked up behind iron bars."

" Enough of this nonsense, Munsheimer," said the warden, sternly. " You have been a party to this attempt to save your life, there is no use denying it. If you refuse to tell us of your own accord who were your accomplices, we shall take the proper steps to find out."

" I wish you joy, sir, in the undertaking," said Munsheimer, bowing with mock politeness. " When you discover the name of my self-sacrificing relative, I shall be exceedingly obliged if you will inform me who he is."

" Take this man back to his cell," said the warden to the keeper.

When the two men had left the room, the warden turning to the stranger said, his whole manner having changed: " I shall keep my pledge to you, sir, although in so doing I am false to my duty to the State. You are in possession of facts that should belong to the police. There has been an extraordinary conspiracy here, the nature of which I cannot understand, but which should certainly be laid bare. My tongue, however, is tied by the promise you have exacted from me. Munsheimer will be electrocuted this afternoon at three o'clock, and no one outside of the prison officials and yourself will be informed of the fact or allowed to be present. Are you satisfied now? And will you not, of your own accord, throw some light upon this mystery ? "

" That, sir, is impossible. I can assure you, however, as a gentleman, that I am shielding no criminal, nor am I by my silence in any way obstructing the course of justice. The murderer is here, he has never left his cell, his execution will avenge the crimes he committed. As for the delay of a few days, that has

harmed no one, and instead of blaming me, you should thank me for having put you in possession of facts relieving you of the charge of negligence. Your instructions were to execute this man within the week beginning April the 13th. Instead of executing him on the first day of that week, you will have done so on the last day. In that you are acting within the limits of your own discretion, and if any one asks you why you did not deny the sensational reports in this case, you have only to say that you did not deem it incumbent upon you to consider seriously the product of reporters' imaginations. They said that your prisoner had escaped and cheated the electric chair; you produce the doctor's certificate that the prisoner was duly executed as prescribed by the law. If any one doubts your statement, they have only to come and look at the corpse, which I advise you to keep for a few days, and also to have photographed. Now, Mr. Warden, it only remains for me to thank you for your honorable action, and to leave you to your duties. I shall remain in the prison until the execution has taken place."

"Very well, sir," said the warden, who did some hard thinking during the next few hours.

* * * * *

The next morning the Daily Chronicle came out with a two-page article, that startled New York and the whole country, as no newspaper article had done for years. It was an exclusive account of the conspiracy to save the murderer Munsheimer, of the way that conspiracy had been baffled, and of the man's final execution. The method by which the murderer had been so wonderfully disguised, was explained in detail, opinions being given by experts, who stated that it is possible to prepare the face so cunningly, by building up the nose, the chin, and the cheek bones with wax additions, and then covering the whole with liquid enamel, that such a fraud would not be detected for several days, possibly weeks, not until the enamel had worn off sufficiently to expose the edges of the added parts, or until it had begun to crack. Then followed a statement made by Munsheimer, giving full details of his crime, and making absolute confession of his guilt.

On the night of the day when the Chronicle secured this greatest "beat" in its history, "Pittsburgh" Williams found in his box, in the City Department, an envelope containing a check for one thousand dollars, and the congratulations of Mr. Stanley Russell.

RAWSON'S CHRISTMAS TURKEY.

BY EUGENE SHADE BISBEE.



ARVEY RAWSON arose on the morning before the national feast day, and after arraying himself even more carefully than usual, descended to the breakfast-room with the air of a man upon whose shoulders rested a most stupendous responsibility. The toddling Marjorie had breakfasted and been carried away by Nora, an importation from the County Kerry with a French cap and a brogue, leaving Rawson alone with his wife, who was pouring the coffee as he took his chair. She began without the preliminary good-morning: "Now, Harvey, you can easily catch the 8:41, and you'll be sure and be home by noon with the things, won't you, dear? Let me see; don't forget the oyster plant, you know it wouldn't seem like Christmas without oyster plant, and—oh, yes; be sure and bring some of that lovely celery that Green always has—we can't get any fit to eat anywhere else. I think we have everything else except the turkey. Be sure and get a dry-picked one, Harvey, and don't pay more than twenty cents a pound for it—you know what a lovely one we got last year for eighteen cents; and—oh, yes; you might put a bottle of brandy in your pocket for the mince pies; I don't think Baker keeps the real imported, do you, dear? Perhaps it will do, though. Is your coffee sweet enough? I declare, I'm awfully annoyed about the turkey; it's a shame there were no nice ones here; too bad you have to go to the city to-day, too; but come home early, dear, you know how fussy cook is about having everything at her elbow, and I want our dinner to be a success. And don't you know, dear——"

But Rawson heard not. He simply broke his eggs, munched a piece of toast, sipped his coffee, and punctuated his wife's remarks by affirmative nods, as she chattered happily on. Presently he arose, got his overcoat, kissed her good-bye, and boarded the 8:41, as it stopped for an instant at Lyndhurst.

"Hello, Rawson, where are you going?" cried a familiar voice, as he dodged between trucks on West street, and after safely reaching the curb, he saw Billings standing before him on the

corner, smiling with the characteristic amusement of the New Yorker at his friend's narrow escape from death beneath the multitude of wheels. "Oh, up to Washington Market to buy a turkey ; come along ?" "Go you," replied Billings, briefly, and up Cortlandt street together they went.

At the corner of Church, Rawson said : "Cold, isn't it ? Let's go in and have something hot."

"Good scheme," replied the obliging Billings, pushing open the door.

Rawson thought a "Tom and Jerry" would about hit the spot, and Billings, ever accommodating, said : "Make it two."

Then they had two more on Billings.

"Now let's go and get that turkey," said Rawson, "I've got to get the one-eleven for home ; got anything to do ?"

"No," replied Billings.

"Then come with me ?"

"Sure !"

Rawson had the celery and oyster plant wrapped up and sent to a place conveniently near the ferry, and they were wondering how they were going to manage the twenty-pounder they had picked out, when a bright idea struck Billings.

"Say, Rawson ; what's the use buying any blamed turkey when we can get one for nothing ? I'm thirsty, aren't you ?"

"Yes, of course I am," responded Rawson, with the look of a man whose feelings had been injured by the superfluity of the question.

"Well, let's go and hunt up some place where they are raffling a turkey. We can have a drink, and shake for the bird, savey ?"

"Billings, I'll always be glad I know you ; you're a genius ; you've saved me a five dollar bill on that turkey ; we can win one for a quarter. I feel luck in my bones, do you ?"

"Sure ; lucky enough to win any old turk that ever flew the coop."

The first place they made for was on Broadway near Park Place, and right in front of them on the bar, reposing in a bed of celery and cranberries, was a monstrous turkey. In his throat was stuck a small skewer holding a card, which bore the legend :

25c. A CHANCE.

"When are you going to raffle him ?" queried Billings of the smiling attendant, pointing to the bird.

" You can shake now, sir. Anything over forty-two wins it, or you can take two small ones."

" How much does he weigh?" asked Rawson.

" Thirty-four pounds, sir," replied the mixologist.

Fifty cents went over the bar.

" Two 'Tom and Jerrys,' and I'll shake her up once," said Rawson.

He shook eighteen.

" Great Scott! Give me the box! I can beat than rank throw!" cried Billings.

The bones rattled across the mahogany.

Seven—fourteen—two aces, making twenty-three. Rawson's lip curled sarcastically.

" I'll shake you to see who pays for two more throws," he remarked.

" Roll 'em out," was Billings' brief rejoinder.

Rawson won, but was far below the necessary forty-three to win the turkey.

" Say, Rawson, I'm getting too much of this egg business. Let's make it a hot Scotch," suggested the convivial Billings.

" That suits me," responded Rawson, and the next round marked the change.

A dollar had gone for chances on the turkey, and they shook to see who paid fifty cents each time for the two throws.

And after every throw they had a hot Scotch.

The weather had sharpened, and a feathery frost began to form on the plate glass windows. The cafe was comfortable, and both men were set on winning that turkey.

Rawson felt that he *must* win it to recuperate, and Billings was equally determined that he would present it to his friend for having inveigled him into the game.

Occasionally some other customer would try his luck, and losing, walk out. Nobody seemed to expect to win it but Billings and Rawson, but simply chanced a quarter as a part of the season's festivities.

And still the ivory cubes rattled out of the box; and still the silver went over the bar. Rawson looked at his watch.

" Jove, old fellow; missed that one-eleven; have to catch two-fourteen now; shake 'em up again; got to hurry; wife's waitin' for that turkey."

" 'Sall right; win her in a minute; don't be in a rush; catch s'm'other train; here goes," replied Billings, shaking them out.

And time rolled on. Likewise the dice.

"Have cigar?" asked Rawson.

"Shake you for one," replied Billings.

"Let her go," and cigars came to flavor the Scotch.

"Hey! barkeep; I got her!" cried Billings, and sure enough he had, for the total count made forty-four.

The attendant smiled, and asked: "Will you have two small ones?"

"Not by a jugful! Gimme the big one!" cried the happy winner.

A waiter tied the bird up and placed him on the bar before them. Billings gave him a quarter.

"Let's have a bottle of wine on it, old man," he said to Rawson.

"That's good;" replied his friend, and they celebrated the good luck with a small bottle.

"Now 've got to catch train; lessee, one at three-fifty-six;" said Rawson.

"Ah, never mind 'bout train, have another;" said Billings.

"No; got 'nough. Say! whose turkey's that?" asked Rawson, suddenly, eying the bird on the counter.

"'S my turkey;" answered Billings.

"No, it's not; 's mine;" sharply responded Rawson.

"You're crazy; 's my turkey; didn't I throw—— say, barkeep, what——"

"Never mind the barkeep; guess I know whose turkey 'tis;" said Rawson.

"Well, I'm going to give him to your wife with my comp'-ments;" replied Billings.

"Blamed kind givin' my turkey away;" said Rawson.

"Tell you it's my turkey, Rawson."

"Bet you fl' dollars 't's mine, old man."

"Go you; produce your five;" said Billings, bringing up a wad from his pocket and throwing a bill on the bar.

Rawson covered it and they referred to the barkeeper, who pronounced in favor of Billings, who scooped the money and then insisted that another small bottle was due from Rawson.

Rawson acquiesced, and they sampled another.

Billings looked at the clock above the cigar stand.

"Say, old man, you better be movin' 'f you 'spect to get that train; what time she go?" he asked.

"Jerusalem!" cried Rawson, "only got ten minutes;" and

grabbing the turkey, he shot out of the door, closely followed by Billings.

A cable car was passing, and both landed on the platform and then went inside, where they sat on either side of the turkey. Billings grew reminiscent, and entertained Rawson with numerous amusing anecdotes. The time passed quickly. Presently the conductor came in, and Rawson said : "Stop at Cortlandt, please."

"This car don't go down-town," replied the man.

"Where in blazes does it go?" replied the man.

"Fifty-ninth street," answered the conductor.

"Are we goin' up-town?"

"Certainly you are," said the conductor.

Both men made a rush for the door, and dropped off while the car was moving. They stood in front of the Saint Denis, and looked at each other.

Then Rawson said : "Well, can't get three-fifty-six now ; have to catch five-fourteen."

Billings was equal to the emergency.

"'Sall right ; le's go in and have an apple toddy."

"Where's the turkey?" suddenly asked Rawson.

"You've got him," replied Billings, looking at Rawson's empty hands.

"Got nothin' ! Didn't you bring him?"

"No ; thought you had him."

"Great Scott ; he's on the car!" almost yelled Rawson.

"Cab, sir?" asked a waiting cabby.

"You bet!" cried Rawson. "Catch that car up by the Morton House, and I'll give you 'nother dollar," and he pushed Billings in, and tried to jump in after him, but his head hit the top, and an eight dollar silk hat was smashed over his ears. But the cabby cracked his whip, and they started after the turkey. The street was pretty crowded, but they finally overtook their car at Eighteenth street, and Rawson sprang out and boarded it, leaving Billings to settle with the cabman. In five minutes he came back, victory expressed on his face, as he proudly swung the bird by the feet.

"That was lucky," said Billings.

"You bet!" assented Rawson.

"Well, might as well walk down to the Spingler and have that toddy now. Cold ridin' in that old cab, wasn't it?" said Billings.

They found the hot apple toddy so comforting that they had several, and finally adjourned to a table to have "another" while they waited for train time. The crowd grew more numerous and mutual friends began to drop in. They had several more. Rawson missed the five-fourteen and telegraphed his wife as follows :

"Been detained in city on important business. Be home with turkey on eleven-forty.
HARVEY."

Then they went over to Riccadonna's and had an Italian dinner, while the turkey was put in the ice-box. After dinner they started for Tony Pastor's. The performance was not to the liking of either. Rawson complained of the house being over-heated and suggested that they seek a cooler atmosphere, to which the ever-ready Billings assented. Upon reaching the sidewalk they found Fourteenth street a sheet of white and the snow falling thick and fast.

"Le's go down to corner and get warm," said Rawson.

"Just said 'twas too hot," replied Billings.

"Well, must have made a mistake. Look at the snow," answered his friend.

The end of this dialogue found them in front of two smoking glasses at the corner of Third avenue.

Billings cast his eye toward the other end of the room, whence sounds of merriment issued, when his face assumed a peculiar expression, which caused Rawson to ask : "What's matter with *you*?" and at the same time turn his own head.

The sight that met his glance brought a look of puzzlement to his face, and he at once confronted Billings.

"That our turkey those fellows shakin' for?" he asked.

"No, 's'nother turkey," answered Billings, taking another swallow.

"Then where's ours?"

"Don' know. Must be in theater."

"That's so. Le's go and get him."

"All right," said Billings.

They bought two admissions and went in. The usher had seen no turkey, neither was the bird in their former seats. Upon being remonstrated with for obstructing the view by prowling around in search of the missing turkey they adjourned to the lobby to hold council.

Said Rawson :

"Where did we leave him?"

"Don' know," answered Billings.

"Did we eat him?" asked Rawson in deep seriousness.

"Don' know. See any feathers on me?" queried Billings.

"No; don't see any feathers; must eaten feathers, too."

"No, I didn't; I don't want any feather dusters inside o' me; maybe we left him somewhere."

"Say, Billings, where did we eat?"

"Don' know, I told you; don't you know?"

"Dorlon's?"

"No, didn't eat there," answered Billings, emphatically.

"By Jove! I know," exclaimed Rawson.

"Where?" queried Billings.

"Rick's!" decidedly.

"Did we leave turkey there?"

"Guess so; let's go see."

"What time is it?" asked Billings.

Rawson looked at his watch.

"Ten-thirty," he said; "just got time; le's take cab."

They drove back to Riccadonna's. The smiling proprietor greeted two such good customers effusively and opened a small bottle while the turkey was being securely wrapped and tied. Of course they had "another" on the strength of their good luck in finding the troublesome bird and then started together for the ferry. Billings was determined to see his friend and the turkey safely started for home.

They managed to reach the ferry in time for the last boat connecting with the eleven-forty train, and Rawson flew in the corner cafe for his celery and oyster plant. Recollecting his wife's admonition, he put a bottle of brandy in his pocket, and hurried aboard the boat, Billings just in advance with the turkey.

On landing, the latter bade him a jovial farewell, and laden with bundles, the belated Rawson got into the smoker and settled himself for the forty minutes run to Lyndhurst. His own carriage awaited him at the station—his own wife at the door.

"Oh, Harvey," she cried, "I'm so glad you've come! Where's the turkey?"

Rawson looked around in a helpless sort of way, and then bracing himself, replied: "Must be in the carriage—have Williams bring him in."

"There's no turkey in the carriage, sir," replied the coachman, to the message sent him.

A great light dawned on Rawson.

"Dorothy," he said, "that infernal turkey has been the cause of my missing at least two trains, and now I've left it on the one I did manage to catch. We'll eat fried liver for Christmas dinner."

"Oh, Harvey! and to think of the awful humiliation when the invitations can't possibly be recalled solate," and she burst into tears.

That effectually altered his mind.

"Send for Williams at once, Dorothy, and I'll get your turkey; there, don't cry, little girl," he urged, placing his hand on her shaking shoulder as she stood with her handkerchief pressed to her bowed face.

But she was beyond the power to send for any one, so he stepped into the cheerful library and pounded a bell. To the maid who appeared, he said: "Have Williams drive to the station at once and telegraph to Bolton to the agent to get a turkey from the smoking car of No. 63, and send to me by first train returning."

The turkey came back by a train about three o'clock, and when placed before the gathered company, was worthy of the trouble he had cost.

When the guests had all gone, Rawson took his wife aside.

"I've just done a little figuring, dear," he said. "Did you like your turkey?"

"It was perfectly lovely, Harvey. I'm going to have you get one every time."

"No, you don't!" he replied, with decision, a peculiar twinkle in his eye.

"Why, dear?" she ingenuously asked.

"Do you know how much that turkey cost?" he queried, by way of reply.

"About twenty cents a pound."

"I wish it had," he answered. "Dorothy, that ugly beast cost me a whole day away from you, and four dollars and thirty-seven cents a pound," and he smiled oddly.

She looked at him quizzically for a moment, and then said: "Oh, Harvey!"

A rustling as of softly crushing silk was all the reply, then a muffled voice saying: "Oh, Harvey, you'll spoil my chrysanthemums," which was once more quieted with a sound suspiciously like a series of kisses, followed by two voices in merry laughter, as Harvey Rawson led his wife toward their own cozy corner in the library.

THE BIRD THAT WAS NOT COOKED.

BY HARRY C. ANTES.



"ID we ever play draw in the army? Well, yes, we sometimes had a little game."

The Major smiles, as some pleasing reminiscence of the past passes through his mind. He leans back indolently in his easy chair, carefully wipes his mouth and military whiskers with a napkin, and then, in his slow, deliberate manner, proceeds to fill his cherished meerschaum with his favorite tobacco.

It is the regular Saturday evening session of our "club," restricted both as to membership and betting limit. It is more of a social than a gaming club, although the regular business of the evening is never neglected.

It is our custom, as the ghostly hour of midnight draws nigh, to send one of the "boys" to the cafe on the corner, for the purpose of purchasing a slight collation. For this purpose we levy a trifle from each jack-pot played between eleven and twelve. It is just after we have partaken of this refreshment, when the Major is in his best humor, that he often favors us with a choice anecdote ere we return to the game. And as to-night he has been pleased to graciously approve of the taste displayed by the gentleman who was elected caterer for the evening, and as his stack of "blues" is rather tall, we anticipate a good yarn.

"D'l ever tell you about the great game that I sat in one night while we lay in front of Vicksburg? No? You would like to hear the story? All right, then, here goes!"

"Well, boys, it was while Grant's army was besieging Vicksburg. I tell you it was hot down there those days. Not like it is now, when a lot of boy tin soldiers strut around with an old musket on their shoulder, and imagine that the carrying of a gun and the knowledge of the meaning of a few military phrases makes all there is of a soldier. M-m-m-m-m!"

The Major sniffs in contempt, glaring defiantly over his spectacles at Pete Shuffle, who belongs to the State Militia, which said organization, by the way, for reasons unknown, the old soldier hates and detests most cordially. But as Pete (good-nat-

ured youth as he is) forbears to argue, and urges the Major on with a deprecating wave of his hand, the latter forgets his spleen and continues :

“ Time hung heavy upon our hands. As you know, Grant had thrown a line of earthworks nearly around the doomed city, and behind them, in mud and heat, lay the Union soldiers, and fought flies and insects, cussed the ‘rebs’ and Jeff Davis, swapped lies and tobacco, contracted debts, rheumatism and pneumonia, killing time as best they could. We had become used to the infernal din made by the big guns, which kept pounding away night and day, so that we could sleep pretty soundly through it all. Occasionally, however, a shell would drop down in the midst of the sleepers, and then they would awaken speedily and take a yelling and absorbing interest in the subsequent proceedings of that shell. Yes, a shell now and then greatly relieved the monotony.

“ ‘How about the game?’ Yes, yes, I’m coming to that right away. Don’t be impatient, boy.

“ Rations were poor—hard-tack and salt pork for the most part, with coffee made from chicory and the muddy water of the river. Fresh meat was a rare treat to us.

“ One raw, chilly morning the boys of our mess were awakened by the loud, shrill crowing of a cock. Such welcome sounds we had not heard for many and many a long day. We were wide awake at once. Without delay we proceeded to arise and investigate.

“ Directly in front of our tent, upon an empty box, sat a fat Dutchman, Sneider by name. In his hand he held a string which was attached to the yellow leg of a lean and scraggy rooster who was engaged in picking up a few stray kernels of corn which lay scattered upon the ground. He was a starved-looking, disreputable old game-cock, had lost one eye and wore a general air of age and decrepitude. Nevertheless, Sneider was contemplating the movements of his new possession with satisfaction, and we ourselves hailed the appearance of this new member of our company with great enthusiasm.

“ ‘Hoorah! Pot-pie!’ yelled one.

“ ‘Stew! Soup! Roast! Stuffed! Baked!’

“ Everyone had a different suggestion to make, each and all smacked their lips in anticipation. As for me, I always did like fried chicken.

“ ‘Bully for you, Dutchy!’ exclaimed Jake Simmons, a long, lank New Englander.

“ Dutchy turned and calmly regarded the speaker.

“ ‘Vat vor you zay, bully, Dutchy, eh?’

“ ‘Why, because you have a chicken, of course. Who’s hen-roost is shy?’

“ ‘Yah, I haf got me a leetle shickeen. Vat is more, I shall keep me dot leetle shickeen,’ replied Dutchy, altogether ignoring the base insinuation conveyed in the latter phrase of Simmons’ question.

“ We exchanged looks of alarm. Sneider had never been regarded as the most brilliant man in camp, and the thought that we would have trouble in coaxing him to share the treat had never entered our minds.

“ ‘My good little friend,’ said I, soothingly, ‘surely, you do not mean to eat that great, big rooster all alone? Why, man, you are not used to such rich fare, it’s apt to cause indigestion. And indigestion, you are well aware, causes fever, and fever in this locality is nearly always fatal.’

“ Dutchy slowly arose to his clumsy feet, beckoning to me with his fat forefinger.

“ ‘Coom you here.’

“ ‘I obeyed, thinking that I was the lucky man with whom he had decided to share his ‘leetle shickeen.’ Good, generous heart! My breast heaved with emotion, and my face was wreathed with smiles as I thought of the generosity of the good little man. I did not blame him in the least for not wanting to share his treasure with six or eight great, hulking fellows. That fowl was just large enough for two.

“ When I had approached, with his thumb and forefinger he opened wide his big blue eye.

“ ‘Look you mit dot eye in.’

“ I complied, although my fond hopes of a chicken fry in the near future began to vanish.

“ ‘See you some green mit dot eye, eh?’ he demanded.

“ Well, I decided that there was nothing so very verdant, to be sure, in ‘dot eye,’ but I did see indications of a hoggish nature therein, although I was careful not to tell him so, for I still hoped against hope; so I merely told him that if any verdant thing existed in his eye it was below the surface and could not be seen.

“ ‘Vell, den,’ he exclaimed, in triumph, ‘vas dot shickeen so pig as an osterich, dot I should share heem mit von—tree—seex—I know not how many more—pig yellows all, hey? Nein, nein!

Dot leetle yellow vas pig enough vor yoost von alone. I haf heem caught, I vill heem eat. To-day I vill fat heem, to-morrow I vill eat heem. Coom, my leetle pirdie, coom mit me. Shentlemen, I vish you all goot-day.'

"Dutchy tucked his fowl lovingly under his arm, laughing softly and winking his eye at us in a most aggravating manner as he retreated. Strange how selfish some men are. His hoggishness made me so angry that I could have brained him and taken the rooster away from him with pleasure.

"But one and all, we were of the same mind. We must, by hook or by crook, obtain possession of the chicken.

"Various and many were the stratagems to which we resorted in our efforts to separate the loving couple. Slyly we enticed the rooster from his master's vicinity with corn scattered in a line extending under our tent, where an eager man lay in wait for the unwary fowl. The onery critter ate the corn up to the very edge of the tent, and then, when success almost crowned our efforts, Dutchy would yank at the string and pull him, squawking and fluttering, back to his protecting arms. We created a panic, and put ourselves in jeopardy of a court-martial by yelling, at the top of our voices, 'Fall in! Fall in! Rebs! Rebs!' hoping in the excitement that Schneider, for one brief moment, might desert his precious rooster. But alas! Our efforts were all in vain. Dutchy, it is true, ran, gun in hand, to his place in the ranks, but from under his greasy waistcoat there protruded the scarred, one-eyed head of an old game-cock. We tried to spirit him away while Schneider slept. But he slept with one eye open and foiled our best efforts. Strange how circumstances had sharpened the obtuse mind of that Dutchman.

"(Yes, I will get to the game in a moment now. Patience, patience!)

"When morning again dawned, Schneider was still the proud owner of the fowl, and with much cheerfulness he began to prepare for an early slaughter and his own subsequent refreshment. Then, at length, goaded into desperation, five of us, 'Lanky' Tompkins, Sam Withers, Lew Hotchkiss, Murray and myself, fell upon our last resort, 'chipped in four bits' apiece and purchased that tough old rooster at the exorbitant price of two dollars and fifty cents.

"Immediately there was another difficult question to settle.

"'We'll bile that critter,' solemnly proclaimed 'Lanky,' as we stood in an admiring circle around our new property. 'En

we can throw into the pot a few potatoes, a handful of corn and beans and an onion, (if we can contrive to steal them somewhere,) put in a leetle salt and pepper, and there *you* be! Chicken and chicken-soup!"

" 'Bile yer grandmother!" interrupted Lew Hotchkiss, with hot and irrelevant disdain. "Ain't yer got no sense? There is only one way to cook that fowl, and that way is to bake him."

" 'First bile him, then bake him, else he'll be tougher than all git-out,' said Sam Withers.

" Murray suggested pot-pie. As for me, be that game-cock tough or tender, old or young, I had to have him fried! And fried I was determined he should be, if I had to whip all four of my partners to obtain my desire.

" Well, siree, that was a hot debate. We argued, and jawed, and bullyragged, and cussed through the whole livelong day. When night came on we had the question as near settled as when we began the debate in the morning. Never in my life did I meet with such 'sot' men as those four were. It stands to reason, that when they could not come to any decision, that the only way was for them all to give in and let me fry him. But would they do it? No, indeedy! Every one of the four was as stubborn as a mule.

" A chilly drizzle set in as night came on. After we had eaten our supper of hard-tack and bacon, and fed the rooster, we crouched in our tent and again began the discussion.

" 'Hang it all, boys!' I exclaimed at length, in disgust, as I brought my fist down with a bang upon the empty soap-box which served us for a table, 'there is only one way of settling this question—'

" 'I'll see you in—' (well, boys, a frequently mentioned country where the climate is supposed to be extremely sultry,) 'seven times over, before I'll let you fry him!' yelled 'Lanky.' 'Why, you derned old ijot—'

" 'Oh, shut up that big mouth of yours! Who's talking about frying him, anyhow? No matter how we cook him, he will make a mighty slim meal for five hungry men.'

" They all looked rather blank. In the heat of our argument, I do not think that one of us had thought of this question before.

" I continued, 'now, that fowl is not large enough for five men, he is not large enough for four men, he is not large enough for three men, he would hardly make a full meal for

two men, but I reckon that he would fit *one* man's stomach to a T!"

"They all agreed that I was right. But who was to be the lucky man? Chance must decide for us.

"'Seven-up!'

"'Euchre!'

"'High-five!'

"'Gentlemen,' I interrupted, 'you are all wrong. We are Union soldiers, Americans, and there is but one American game, draw-poker! And there is but one way of settling this question, and that is by playing a freeze-out game of draw-poker, the lucky man to win the rooster and cook him as he likes.'

"This arrangement was satisfactory to all. 'Lanky,' in an audible tone, complimented me by 'wondering why some dog-goned fool hadn't thought of it before?'

"The soap-box we pressed into service as a table. For a light we had a smoky old lantern, borrowed from a neighbor. This threw a very dim and imperfect light over the table, but it answered the purpose well enough. We knelt around the soap-box, (for we had no seats,) in various picturesque but uncomfortable attitudes. I appointed myself to act as a master of ceremonies. As we had no chips, I counted out to each player fifty white and twenty red grains of corn. The white grains we valued at two cents apiece, the red at five cents, thus giving to each pile a fictitious value of two dollars. Of course, table stakes were to be played, with a betting limit of twenty-five cents. We were to play until one man was 'froze out,' then another and another, until finally one would own all of the chips and incidentally the object of dispute.

"Murray produced an ancient deck of cards, and the game began. And, gentlemen," says the Major, looking about to see if we are all awake and paying the proper attention to his narrative, "never before or since in my life, have I 'sat in' a game in which I took such a desperate and absorbing interest as I did in this one. I must own that bird! My mouth watered for fried chicken; the smell of fried chicken was in my nostrils. I'd have that old rooster or bust! And I think that the other four were as interested in the game as I was.

"By and by Dutchy wandered in and expressed great surprise, that the chicken, (which we had tied fast to a convenient stake,) remained alive and apparently in a healthy condition. We explained the situation to him, and he was pleased to express his approval of our plans.

"Tompkins was the first to drop out. 'Lanky' never *could* play poker. He withdrew from the game in dismal silence and retired to gaze mournfully at the unconscious rooster, now lost to him forever. Poor fellow ! I almost felt sorry for him. But I felt elated at my own luck, for 'twas I who now had 'most of his chips.

"My happiness was of short duration. A catastrophe, of most serious consequences to me, occurred, and nearly drove me frantic with rage and vexation. As I think, I mentioned before, it was a rainy night. Our tent was far from large, the front part being particularly leaky, so that we all crouched in the rear. It was my evil hap to be kneeling, with my back fairly rubbing the pole of the tent. Above my right shoulder, at some long distant date, a ragged hole had been torn in the canvas. Over this hole we had stitched an old gunny-sack. Of a sudden, I heard a strange sound by my right ear. Turning my head quickly, a rough, wet, hairy muzzle was thrust against my cheek. I yelled with fright, rolling over upon the ground. Quickly regaining my feet, I saw that the hobgoblin which had scared me out of a year's growth was nothing more nor less than a long-eared mule, who had broken his halter, strayed to our tent, poked his head through the rotten gunny-sack, and was now engaged in the agreeable occupation, (to him,) of eating my stack of red chips whilst my fool companions watched his proceedings with open-mouthed amazement, and let him eat his fill ! I rushed upon the intruder and smote him vigorously, and I am afraid that in my vexation I said a few words that smelled of sulphur. The mule wisely withdrew. He had eaten up nearly a dollar's worth of my red chips ! He couldn't eat the white ones. Oh, no ! Dod-rot-'im," exclaims the Major, with asperity, "he had to have the best there was in sight. White corn was too common for his aristocratic blood, he must have richer food, red corn was the only proper diet for him.

"Kick ! Did I kick ? Of course I kicked. But the more I kicked the more those unfeeling comrades of mine laughed and roared :

"'Table stakes, you know. We can't change the rules at this stage of the game.'

"That was all the satisfaction that they would give me. So that 'will ye, nil ye,' with my hard luck must I be content and continue the game as best I could with my remaining chips. I vowed deep and dire vengeance upon that mule. I picked up a

piece of board that chanced to lay upon the ground, and directly, when our unwelcome visitor came after the remainder of my red chips, I had the satisfaction of whacking him soundly over the head.

“ Now the game was in full swing. Sam Withers held a good hand, ‘aces full’ on queens, and ‘bucked up’ against a good hand which I also held. Four jacks. The result was quite discouraging to Sam, but it was just what I expected when I got my fourth jack in the ‘draw.’ Soon the small remainder of his chips went the way of their predecessors. He joined the melancholy ‘Lanky,’ feasting his eyes upon the rooster that could never be *his*. My star was in the ascendancy once more. Only two more between me and victory.

“ All this time we could hear the boom ! boom ! boom ! of the big guns shelling the city, and sometimes, far away, the shrill, indescribable song which the shell itself sings while in rapid flight through the air. At times, too, that unpleasant song seemed to be coming from the city towards us, for this shelling business was not one-sided by any means. At such times we would experience moments of uneasiness.

“ ‘Rebs are getting our range. Killed eight men with one shell last night,’ observed Tompkins.

“ ‘Ef one of them shells should happen to strike this ‘ere little poker party, it would be mighty apt to ‘raise’ the whole caboodle, eh, ‘Lanky?’” replied Sam Withers, intent, now that he himself was out of the game, in making the remainder of us as uncomfortable as he possibly could.

“ Somehow, I could not get his foolish remark out of my head. The idea of a ‘raise’ is, in nine cases out of ten, unpleasant to the man who plays poker ; this kind of a ‘raise’ was particularly unpleasant to think about. I wished the idiot had more sense than to make such remarks. That confounded screeching seemed to be coming nearer—nearer—nearer—the wild song of the shells was—‘I’m after you—you—you—I’m after you—you—you !’ Dutchy, too, appeared uneasy, for presently he bid us good-night, saying that he was going to his own quarters. I paid little attention to his movements at the time, for the singing of the shells, the perseverance of the mule, (who continually returned), and the excitement of the game kept me well occupied with my own private affairs.

“ Murray, about this time went to join the others, now ‘a (silent) majority,’ grouped about the rooster that was never to

be *his*. Lew Hotchkiss and I were alone in the struggle. Now would come the tug of war!

“Did we have good hands?” Oh, yes, we had good hands, and medium hands, and small hands, and every other kind of a hand. Still nothing remarkable came along until that last jackpot. And then—

“Lew and I had been playing alone for about thirty minutes. I suggested that we count our chips, as the two stacks seemed about equal. Lew assented. By a singular chance, each had exactly the same amount, four dollars and fifty cents. So we figured it out that the mule had eaten just ninety cents’ worth of my chips.

“As it was now growing late we decided to raise the limit to fifty cents so as to finish the game sooner.

“It was my turn to deal. Lew shoved in a fifteen cent ante.

“‘Pass,’ said I, not having a pair.

“‘Jack, then,’ replied Lew.

“He drew down his fifteen cent ante and shoved ten reds in the center. I followed suite.

“Lew dealt. I picked up my hand. Eight, nine, jack and queen of hearts and the tray of diamonds. So near, and yet so far, so very far, from a straight flush.

“‘Pass,’ said I.

“‘Open ‘er,’ said Lew.

“Would it be wise and best to stay and take my chance of filling in the middle? One chance in fifty-two. Still, I had a fair chance of drawing, if not the ten of hearts, either a ten of some other suite or a heart. Either a straight or a flush. Both fairly good hands. I decided to draw.

“Lew hesitated about discarding, finally throwing away one card. Thought I, ‘he has threes, and is trying to make me think that he has only two pair.’

“I picked up the one card that I had drawn. When I looked at it, every nerve in my body quivered and stung with excitement. I could hardly resist the inclination to let out a yell that would raise the tent from over our heads. Great Jehosiph! I had drawn my ten of hearts, and now held a straight flush! That rooster was mine! Poor Lew!

“Now I always did rather like Hotchkiss. I thought I would let him off easy.

“‘Lew,’ said I, ‘you are beat. Now I tell you what I am willing to do. I will call it a draw, before the show-down, and

we will divide the chicken. After all, I think we can manage to make a meal of him.'

"Oh, I guess that I had better be game and play my hand. Bet yer fifty,' replied Lew, easy like, as he carelessly skinned over his hand.

"My conscience was clear. I had warned him. On his own unbelieving head must fall the consequences.

"See you and raise you fifty.'

"See you and raise you fifty.'

"So we continued, alternately raising and seeing, until our last chip was in the pot. Then came that one short minute of bliss, that moment when each player carefully looks over his hand for the last time to make sure that by no terrible fatality has he made an error, and draws a long breath ere he lays down his hand. But we did not show our hands just then, for a terrible thing prevented us.

"From far away in the distance came the moaning song of the shell—'w-h-r-r-r-r-r-r-r, w-h-r-r-r-r-r-r, I'm after you, w-h-r-r-r-r-r-r, w-h-r-r-r-r-r,'—that shell meant business—'w-h-r-r-r-r-r, I'm after you—you—you—w-h-r-r-r-r-r—w-h-r-r-r-r-r—' we arose from our seats in terror, overthrowing the lamp and putting it out, nearer—nearer—'w-h-r-r-r-r-r, w-h-r-r-r-r-r-r,'—outside someone yelled, 'in the tent, look out there!' and then—

"Through that hole in the canvas came a spent shell, narrowly missing my head, and rolled upon the ground at our feet. The fuse was alive and sputtered and spit spitefully.

"Oh, God save us!"

"Murder! Let me out! Murder!"

"Hellsafire! Run, boys, run!"

"The shell lay between us and the front entrance, and not one of the boys seemed to like the idea of jumping over it as they made their escape. By rights, 'Lanky,' who stood nearest to the sputtering shell, should have proved the heroic stuff that was in him and pulled that live fuse out, but he didn't. He preferred to make for the hole in the back. So did the other three. So did I. I was—

"Who reached it first?" We all did, sonny. Yes, there was not a man of the five to be the last to reach that hole. A struggle, a ripping and a tearing, and five cursing, active men landed in a heap in the mud back of the tent. I was the bottom man, and that is proof that I was the *last* man out of the tent. We did not stay on the ground any great length of time. I rather

think, that of all the sprinting that was done in the army upon occasions, that we broke the record as we headed for the nearest rifle-pit.

“ While we crouched in the pit the thought struck me that perhaps the mule would consider our absence an opportune time to finish his lunch with the jack-pot. By the piper that played before Moses, when I thought of the reception he was apt to meet from the present occupant of our tent, I laughed aloud. ‘Lanky’ seemed to consider my mirth a personal insult, for he called me a—well, a simple person who (if popular tradition be correct) is apt to never suffer cold in the world to come.

“ We waited a long time for that shell to attend to the business upon which it came, but it did not do it. Finally, we concluded that the fuse had gone out, and cautiously ventured towards the tent.

“ ‘ Lew, I had you beat ! ’

“ ‘ Hadn’t, either. Save your hand ? ’

“ ‘ Yes. Save yours ? ’

“ ‘ Yer bet yer bottom dollar ! A man’s a derned ijot to leave go of four aces while the breath of life is in his body—’

“ ‘ Yes, and he is a bigger idiot to throw away a straight flush.’

“ When I told Lew that I held a straight flush, he—but my goodness, boys ! ” exclaims the Major, as he looks at his watch, “ here I have talked and delayed the game nearly an hour ! Start it again, Pete.”

“ One moment, Major,” remonstrates Pete. “ How about that shell ? ”

“ Wasn’t any shell. Only a couple of tin cans and some scrap iron fastened together with wire, and a lighted fuse tied to the dummy. Dutchy invented it and threw it into the tent. Of course, dark as it was in there, we did not notice the deception. No one had sense enough to investigate, anyhow, when the thing came through that hole.”

“ What made the sound which you took for the hissing of the shell ? ”

“ Dutchy, with that big mouth of his.”

“ Who won the chips, Major ? ”

“ Wasn’t any to win. Mule had eaten them up.”

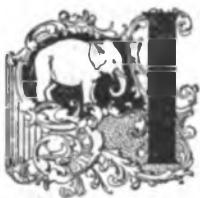
“ Then how could you decide who owned the rooster ? ”

“ Didn’t have to decide. Sneider had stolen him. Your ante, son.”

THE PRIZE WINNER AT Y—.

BY JOHN J. A'BECKET.

I.



FI could only get it on the market there would be thousands in it, Nannie, and we could get married right off," said Hathaway, with a slight cloud on his candid face.

"And to think that it is such a small amount of money after all," answered Nannie Eaton, plaintively. "I wish I had it right in my hand now. You should have the model made for your invention and sent to the Patent Office as soon as you could. It may make us millionaires, Ned, and then we can have everything we want."

"Yes—and in the meantime we can't have anything that we want," replied the young man, bitterly.

"Don't say that, Ned." Nannie put her hand impulsively on her lover's. "We have each other, and I will wait a hundred years for you. But it does seem hard that a young genius who has conceived such a brilliant invention as this cannot profit by his work because he can't get sixty, eighty, a hundred dollars to have the model of it made."

"It shows that these are 'hard times' with a vengeance," returned the young fellow. "But it must come right in the end."

As if to start things in the desired direction he put his arm round the girl's neck, drew her head, with its silky, golden-brown hair, toward him and kissed her warmly.

Hathaway was a civil engineer, the son of a widowed mother, who depended entirely upon him for her support. Nannie Eaton's mother, also a widow, had a small income which afforded herself and daughter hardly any relief from economical forethought. They were gentlewomen with the need of maintaining their family distinction in the matter of clothes, place of residence, and style of living. Genteel poverty is the hardest grade of indigence.

Ned had been engaged to Nannie for a year. But everybody concerned felt that the young people ought not to marry until

Hathaway was in a position to shoulder the expensos of a wife and family. Even the young man and woman recognized the reasonableness of this, but it was not very pleasant to have to accept such a condition of things.

Nannie Eaton was a sweet, lively girl, who liked riding her wheel in summer and skating in winter. She could almost out-scorch Ned Hathaway when they struck a long, level stretch of quiet road. There were a number of fine bicycling roads in Y—, and almost a fever of interest in the sport. Y— had recently had a bicycle festival, in which prizes were given for all sorts of different things. It had been a howling success. The neighboring city of M—, which was the great municipal rival of Y—, was also in healthy bondage to the wheel. It had a splendid avenue, broad and level, which ran from one end of the city to the other, and then became a country road, almost as good for wheeling, for miles. With such superior advantages for the wheel-people as this, far better than anything Y— could boast, and with even more enthusiasm in bicycle matters than its rival, it was a foregone conclusion that M— would not view the bicycle parade in the former city with philosophic indifference.

It did not. That had been a day affair. M— proceeded to organize a night pageant for the wheelers. The city went wild over the idea. The long, broad avenue was overarched by elms for nearly the whole of its extent. What possibilities for illumination with Chinese lanterns, electric lights and the like those overlacing boughs afforded? To thoroughly outdo Y— in this night bicycle pageant, there were more prizes offered, there were prizes for a greater variety of things, and they were of greater value than those which had been put up to stimulate the ambitious cyclers of the rival town. As one of the local papers in M— remarked editorially:

“ We have already surpassed our sister city in its creditable but somewhat modest list of prizes, and there can be no doubt that the brilliancy of a night pageant, with its bewildering variety of lights, is far beyond that of a day spectacle. It only remains to be seen whether the ingenuity and civic pride of M— will bring out worthier candidates than the Y— cycle festivity produced. That it will do so is hardly matter for doubt. Many of the designs, decorations, and costumes at this little affair in Y— were quite pretty, though it must be allowed that nothing was startlingly original or notably striking by reason of its taste-fal elegance.”

The last sentence was characteristic of the editorial comment of M— papers on Y— doings. However, it was equally

characteristic of the Y— papers when its neighbor was in question. It was the first duty of an editorial writer in either city to dart his eye over the rival papers every morning to see if his town had come in for the damnation of faint praise, or the exaltedly patronizing tone of the moral censor, deprecating unseemly infirmities in the other city's civic constitution.

Y— proceeded to typographically belittle the coming "imitation of our city's broadly fostering care of the community's well-being in the healthful sport of the cycler," and to inwardly quake at the prospect of being outshone by a more glorious display. All the young people in both cities who rode wheels were intensely excited over the coming event.

When Nannie Eaton read that among the prizes was one of a silver-mounted wheel of any desired make, or a purse of \$150.00, as the winner might elect, for the woman appearing in the most novel costume in the M— pageant, she exclaimed with artless enthusiasm and town pride: "Oh, how I wish some woman from here would get that prize, just to take the wind out of their sails!"

Mrs. Eaton was not very strong, and it was a lucky thing that her brother, Silas Codman, a wealthy New York merchant, happened to come to Y— for his annual visit to his sister, just in time to take his niece over to M— for this bicycle pageant. Nannie would not have missed it for the world, and as she had to spend the night at M—, if she went, but for this opportune arrival of Uncle Silas, she would have had to be content with reading about it in the papers. She knew that neither press of the rival cities could be relied on for a fair account of the thing. M— would overdo, Y— underdo it. So, having wrought Uncle Codman up to a ferment of enthusiasm about the wheelers of Y—, and a keen desire to see how far short of thein M— would fall, she departed for the latter city in the charge of that worthy relative, on the morning of the day of the festivity.

The evening was one to make Y— fume. It was perfectly adapted to the glitter and flashing lights and sparkling illuminations of the M— wheel pageant. The sky was clear, but a blue black. The moon would not enter into rivalry with the myriad sublime spheres, which flashed, or glittered, or glowed, in the wide, elm-arched avenue. The air, moreover, was perfectly still, not a breath of wind to blow out lights or set lanterns ablaze, or mingle smoke with flame. Through the broad avenue flowed a river of bobbing globes of multi-colored fires, great globules of

blue and yellow and green and orange and red in every shade, Chinese lanterns floating lightly along in the gently seething stream of color. Then the electric lights, the graceful festoons of orbs and ovoids and paper bodies of every shape, mellow with the lights within them, that swung from branch to branch of the elms, in exquisite curves and swaying festoons, made a glowing network above the cyclers' heads.

Y— was downed, thrown flat on her municipal back, choking with envy, not even a good second. Not one thought to soothe the chagrin of defeat except the gross one that it must have cost M— a pretty penny to do it.

Yes. There was one other.

As the gayly decorated wheels and the costumed riders glided by, greater or lesser applause from the dense crowd that lined either side of the avenue told of the variously meritorious taste of the masquerading riders. Uncle Silas, with a huge field glass, was eagerly scanning the procession of wheelers as they swept by below the balcony of his room at the Dunthorpe House.

Far down the line a great roar of applause had started and ran along the whole file of spectators, steadily increasing in volume as it approached the Judges' stand, which was in front of the Dunthorpe. Some wheeler had caught the popular fancy, and as he or she came into view, kindled the throng to bursts of enthusiasm.

Ah, here was the conquering hero, and it was a conquering heroine.

“A Gold Bug!” “Good!” “Great!” “Ain’t that immense?” “Hurrah! You’ve got it!” “She is the dandy!” broke from the populace, as the glittering object gracefully glided by.

It was a shapely woman who had got herself up as a Gold Bug. The head and antennæ and wings, coated with gold foil, glittered as if solid layers of the precious metal. The brightest yellow silk fleshings, and narrow bands of black satin at varying intervals and widths, not an inch wide at the top, and narrowing proportionately as they approached the ankles, made her limbs columns of alternating jet and gold. The arms of the woman were sheathed in black suede kid, studded with tiny gold beads. The head of the bug concealed the head of the woman so that it could not be seen. The wings and body extended over the hind wheel of the bicycle.

Small paper globes, so made that the front and sides were round and painted to look like twenty, ten and five-dollar gold

pieces, while the rest of the lantern was opaque, decorated the bar of the wheel.

A string of perfectly-graded, round, yellow balls, illumined, but in the thinnest of black gauze, as if to hint at the present retirement of gold, dangled from a bar above the rider's head in a line parallel to the wheels.

It was a novel, striking, artistic spectacle. Nothing in the line was so original, so fetching, so perfectly carried out as this conception of "A Gold Bug."

The Judges awarded the prize for "the woman who should appear in the most original costume" to this lady without one dissentient voice. Popular acclaim had already declared her the worthiest competitor for it.

When the prize was bestowed there were two drawbacks to the satisfaction of the community of M—. The young woman declared herself to be "Miss Prima Golden, of Y—." This was disgusting enough. When Miss Golden promptly elected to have the money instead of the silver-mounted wheel, all the bicycling women of M— said this mercenary spirit was just what they would have expected in a Y— wheel-woman, and audibly expressed their gratitude for liking the sport for itself alone.

Subsequently the M— papers had a sop to their wounded feelings. Diligent inquiry among the women of Y— who rode the wheel failed to discover anyone who had ever heard of "Miss Prima Golden." Whereupon with much dignity, the M— papers declared that they refused to accord the glory of the prize to a Y— wheel-woman (the money had already gone to the Gold Bug competitor), until her identity as such was fully established. It could easily have been an enemy of M— who had taken this means of humiliating it. As no Y— woman came forward and said she was the winner, but had given an assumed name, the matter remained unsettled.

II.

"NED, if you had the money you would get the model for your invention made right off, wouldn't you?" asked Nannie Eaton, of her young man a few days after the pageant in M—. Uncle Silas had departed the day before.

"Sure!" returned Mr. Hathaway, with much emphasis. "But you'd think it was a gold mine I had to get. It is almost as hard to find it."

"Well, there it is!" exclaimed Nannie, proudly, holding out a hundred-dollar bill and a fifty-dollar bill.

Ned gasped with surprise; then grinned with delight; then, pushed it away.

"I can't take it from you, Nannie. You can't afford it, and, in any case, I wouldn't borrow money from the girl I was engaged to. Thank you, awfully, dear girl, for your kindness."

"Ned Hathaway, don't be a silly!" exclaimed Miss Eaton, impatiently. "Take it! You don't object to owing my Uncle Silas a \$150.00, I hope, when you need it so badly, and he a millionaire."

"Oh, that's a different thing, Nannie," cried the young man. "I'm perfectly willing to owe Mr. Codman a thousand dollars, for when my invention gets on the market I know well enough I can pay it back. You were a trump to get it for me."

"Don't mention it," said Nannie, merrily. "It's all in the family. Only I mean that. 'Don't mention it,' literally, for Uncle Silas would be vexed if he knew what I had done with the money."

"All right. I'll keep quiet about it then."

The next Saturday afternoon they took a turn on their wheels. When they got out in the country, they had a race. Nannie beat Ned, and was off her wheel, sitting on the green slope at the side of the road before he got to the point agreed on. She was laughing good-naturedly over her triumph, and began to chaff Ned about being beaten, after he had seated himself by her side. He seemed absent-minded and serious.

"Nannie," he said slowly, "there's something I've got to tell you. It's troubling me. You know I was at that wheel show in M—. Well, after it was over, I coursed about in one of the side-streets, where there was not so much of a crowd. A cab was coming down the street, when an idiot of a boy threw a fire-work of some kind right in front of the horse. It began to spit fire and bang like blue blazes, and the horse ran away. The cabby couldn't control him. There was a woman inside. She stood up, in her alarm, and perhaps was thinking of jumping out. I saw that she was the 'Gold Bug' girl, from her black and yellow legs. I was afraid she would jump, and bounced off my wheel, got in front of the horse, made him pull up a little and then grabbed and held him.

"The girl drew her mackintosh around her again. She had on a thick black veil and I could only see that she was pale and had dark hair.

"I asked her if she wanted to take another cab, and she shook

her head—making signs with her fingers. I had a note-book and pencil which I handed to her, saying I didn't know the alphabet that deaf and dumb people use, and if she wanted to say anything she could write it in that. She only scrawled in a back-handed writing: 'Thanks, I'll go on in this cab. You are very kind.'

"Well, Nannie," said Ned, sheepishly, "that girl has stuck in my memory ever since. It's a sort of infatuation. I thought I could shake it, or that it would wear away. But it hasn't. It's unreasonable to feel this way, and I don't know what's the matter. But it's only honorable to tell you, because I haven't been able to use that money you got for me when I was so—so—oh, I don't know what to call it—" he said almost angrily, "but I can't use it while she is in my thoughts like this. It may wear off in a little while. She gave a false name, and I haven't been able to find a trace of her, although she was a Y— woman. At least, she said so to the judges."

"Oh, you tried to look her up, did you?" exclaimed Miss Eaton, a little sharply.

"Yes. It is a tom-fool thing, Nannie, but I had to tell you, for I can't use that money from you while I've got this interest in that girl. She had a beautiful figure, and rode well, and then finding out her infirmity, kind of clinched it. Now you know the whole thing. You'll have to take back the money."

Mr. Hathaway again looked sheepish and also gloomy.

"Then, I suppose, you had better take this back," said Miss Eaton, tugging at her engagement ring.

"Oh, no! Don't rub it in, Nannie. I know that this is a fool thing, and I love you better than a thousand 'Gold Bugs.' If I hadn't cared for you so much I wouldn't have told you till later. But it vexed me to be caught in such a fix."

"You always said you liked blondes better than brunettes," remarked Nannie, reproachfully. "I ought to break the engagement at once and never see you again. You can't expect a girl to forgive a man for loving another girl better than herself. They never do. They simply break their hearts, or get some better fellow. I don't mean to break my heart, Mr. Hathaway, I can assure you."

"I should hope not," answered the young man, gloomily. "I'm not worth *that*. Oh, it's a stupid thing, and it was stupid to tell you of it. But I felt like a hypocrite. I don't begin to care for the girl as I do you, Nan. How could I? But she sticks

in my mind like a burr. I only wanted you to know it, and understand why I return the money. You do, don't you?"

"Oh, certainly," replied Miss Nannie, disdainfully. "I admire your nobility in not taking pecuniary assistance from one girl when you have transferred your affection to another. I will keep the money till you get to a more desirable frame of mind by falling a little deeper in love with this golden creature, or falling out of it entirely. I think you had better fall more in love with her, for I do not know as I can bring myself to regard this 'infatuation,' as you call it, so lightly as to take you back when you see fit to return. There are plenty of nice young men in this town, Mr. Hathaway. We will go home now, and pray don't trouble yourself to call until you receive an invitation from me to do so."

It was in vain that Hathaway tried to get her to regard the matter from his point of view. He had only tried to be honorable and candid with her, and he loved her. Why would she put such a serious aspect to this silly episode, etc., etc., etc. Miss Eaton was obdurate.

He got no invitation to call for a whole week. He had never before realized how empty a place Y— was, and what hard work it was for a young man to fill his evenings agreeably.

After eight days Miss Eaton got a note.

"**MY DEAR NANNIE:**

"Can you ever forgive me for being such a fool? I am cured. It was a ridiculous affliction, but if it has robbed me of your dear love I think it may be a fatal one—for me. Don't think I have been thrown down by the 'Gold Bug' woman. Quite the contrary. I inclose a note which I received from that lady, which should have had quite a different effect. It has cured me of her absolutely. So I have something to thank her for. May I not come and see you soon and try to get you to forget what an ass I have been.

"Yours most devotedly forever,
"E. J. HATHAWAY."

"P. S.—I sent a note to the lady that she had over estimated my slight service, and that I would not be able to call."

"P. P. S.—It must have been what she said about her not being dumb that settled the business. As soon as I read that I was cured on the spot."

The inclosed note, which Miss Eaton merely glanced at, and then tossed on her writing-table, ran as follows:

"**MY DEAR SIR:**

"I have often thought since your gallant rescue of me the night of the bicycle parade in M— that I have not shown a proper gratitude. I was so nervous at the time, and in such dread of being recognized, that I pretended I was dumb. I am not. I hope you will give me an opportunity to prove that I possess both speech and hearing by calling on me next Thursday evening at eight o'clock at the Algonquin House. Anything I have to say further I will reserve till then."

"**PRIMA GOLDEN.**"

Miss Eaton wrote a nice little note in reply to Mr. Hathaway's, stating that she really must allow him time to let his heart settle, and that it seemed to her as if he were treating the "Gold Bug" lady rather cavalierly, *especially* when she had made such an unusual concession as to invite him to call. Evidently *she* was bright and energetic, for she had found out Mr. Hathaway's name and address, while had not Mr. Hathaway informed her that he had failed to discover the lady's, despite much effort and perseverance? She herself had been going out more of late, and had engagements for every evening that week with different gentlemen friends, but perhaps the following week, if Mr. Hathaway suffered no relapse, she might find some evening free, if another golden beauty had not bewitched him in the meantime.

Two or three days later, Mr. Hathaway got a second note from the "Gold Bug" lady, expressing once more the hope that he would call. "I have heard that you are in need of some assistance to forward a scheme. It has occurred to me that if you will allow me to lend you the money which I got at this pageant it would be a very appropriate use for it. I only mention this because it seems such a ready way of showing my gratitude to you, and I trust you will regard it in this light. I shall not be a hard creditor. Can you not come to see me Tuesday evening at eight?"

Ned Hathaway, instead of being grateful, was wrathy over this note. He did not like the money part of it. Then this woman must be making inquiries about him pretty persistently to know his private affairs so well. He wrote a short, formal note declining the offer, and said that if the lady would kindly forbear from mentioning again his services on the occasion referred to, he would regard it as the truest kindness. He said nothing about this note to Miss Eaton.

The next day a few lines came to him from an intimate friend of Nannie Eaton's, Lonie Farmer, saying Miss Eaton was going to spend the following evening with her, and she had thought Mr. Hathaway might like, perhaps, to call and ride home with her friend, who was going to come on her wheel.

The Farmers lived about a mile out of town in a huge colonial house, with broad verandas running round it. Hathaway dressed with special care and a light heart. He felt if Nannie would only meet him half way this Gold Bug episode could be wiped out effectively. When he arrived, Lonie Farmer greeted him alone, and took him to a corner of the veranda, overshadowed by trees,

on the lawn. It was the pleasant dusk of summer, and more interesting than sitting in a lighted room. Miss Eaton would probably arrive soon.

After chatting with him for half an hour, Miss Farmer jumped up, asking to be excused while she looked up a fan. The rest of the family had gone into town to the theater. Hathaway settled in his rocking-chair, and began to wonder if Nannie was going to fail him after all.

Suddenly, a burst of light at the other end of the veranda made him turn his head. "The Gold Bug," in all her glory, had darted round the corner on her wheel and was making straight for him! He rose, indignant, half-inclined to beat a retreat. How the dickens had she got here? Was this a conspiracy on the part of Miss Farmer and the lady? He turned his face toward the lawn as if he had not noticed the unobtrusive (?) apparition. As the "Gold Bug" wheeled up and dismounted, Miss Farmer came through the window onto the veranda.

"Why, how lovely of you to drop in," she said to the "Gold Bug." "Mr. Hathaway, do you know Miss Golden? What good fortune that she should come when you are here. She tells me you were awfully good to her the night of the M— parade, and will never allow her to thank you. Sit down, Prima, dear."

There was a wriggle of the "Gold Bug" at this request, as if something were agitating its interior economy. Miss Farmer suddenly added: "Oh, you can't, can you, except on your wheel? Don't you want me to help you out of your shell? Mr. Hathaway has never seen you except *incognito*."

"Pray, don't disturb yourself," said Hathaway, quickly. "Someone else may come and I am sure they would be pleased to see the lady in this exquisite guise."

"Oh, is that nasty, hateful Eaton girl going to be here?" came in shrill tones from beneath the gilded head of the "Gold Bug."

Lonie Farmer, instead of resenting this disrespectful way of alluding to her expected guest and dearest friend, burst into a peal of laughter, and sank into a chair. As Hathaway rose very stiffly, and without trying to veil a look of disgust, said "he thought he would bid her good-evening," the girl's merriment only increased, till the tears ran down her cheeks. It was perfectly evident that the "Gold Bug" was convulsed with mirth also. Her frame rattled with the muffled laughter which broke from the paper head and it looked as if she would shake her wings off, so hearty was her glee.

No young man can stand being laughed at unreservedly by two pretty girls. Especially, when he feels that he has been lured into a trap that he might be the butt of a merciless merriment. As for this brazen "Gold Bug," he didn't look for anything very different from *her*. But it was pretty low down for Miss Farmer to guffaw in his presence at the jealous creature's spiteful allusion to Nannie Eaton. He grasped his hat and without any formality except a stiff bow, was starting off, when Miss Farmer, still unable to control her laughter, put a restraining hand on his arm.

"Oh, wait—one—minute!" she gasped. As he sulkily stood, she hastily removed the gold shell from the "Prize Winner of Y—." As she did so, the "Gold Bug" plucked a curly, black wig from her head, and Hathaway beheld the laughing face of—Nannie Eaton.

"You poor, dear man!" she cried breathlessly as she threw herself into a chair and turned her bright eyes on him, her cheeks dimpling with her smile. "Sit down, and we'll talk it all over. So you lost all interest in 'Prima Golden' when you learned that she wasn't dumb. Ned, what you need is a woman who can say the right thing at the right time."

"Nannie," said the young fellow with an impudent grin, "you may not be able to do that. But you know when to keep your mouth closed, and that is a rarer gift in your sex."

BETWEEN FRIENDS.

BY JOHN HABBERTON.



ONGAREW and Puttenham were joint owners of the most successful general store in the large and flourishing town of Millway; they were also the most interesting portion of the store's contents.

The men of Millway liked them because they were the best natured of the merchants who were "square" in business, and also, because with their other commodities, Mongarew and Puttenham had the best assortment of good stories in town, and "kept up" this department of the stock with admirable industry and taste.

Women found the partners polite, truthful and obliging. The same might be said of other Millway shop-keepers, but there were two additional causes of the popularity of Mongarew and Puttenham with the fair sex; one of these no competitor could hope for, while the other he could not expect, unless he first went through a certain bereavement, for Mongarew was a bachelor, while Puttenham had been a widower so long that his grief was several years past the period of outward display.

As each member of the firm was on the sunny side of forty, had good manners, and was not bad looking, it is not necessary to explain further why both were held in high regard by the unmarried women of a town, which had not yet outgrown the size at which a shop-keeper is as good socially as any other man. It should be said, however, that both men were socially inclined, could be depended upon to take part in anything, from a Sunday School picnic to a masquerade dance, and that they frequently "entertained" in capital style in their bachelor quarters, which were the most spacious and handsomely furnished rooms in the town, and cared for by an old woman, who was a model cook.

It is a paradox which every one will understand, that the unmarried condition, which made the partners specially interesting to women collectively, was one which many damsels and widows endeavored to end for one partner or the other. No one could blame the dear creatures, for attractive unmarried men who are well established in business are scarce, even in large cities. One

of Millway's aspiring young women expressed the general sentiment of her competitors in the matrimonial race when she exclaimed one day at a lunch party, where Mongarew and Puttenham were being discussed as possible husbands for some one :

“ Think of the comfort of marrying into the best general store in town.”

Much effort and disappointment might have been prevented had the partners announced publicly the agreement they made, when they started in business together, that neither should marry, nor even become engaged to be married, until he was worth at least ten thousand dollars, aside from his share of the business. They had seen many another clever chap marry without counting the cost, and afterward seen him lose his spirits, his business, and perhaps his wife, to say nothing of leaving a large bill, long unpaid, at the observers' own store. On the other hand, a snug little business, with ten thousand dollars on the outside, was equal to any of the vicissitudes of wedlock—at Millway (happy Millway!)

The partners lived so loyally up to the spirit of this agreement that for several years neither of them weakened even so much as to indulge in a heartache—this, too, despite the fact that women's hearts were as sweet and women's faces as fair at Millway as anywhere else. Yet both men afterward thought, each for himself, that it was a startling coincidence that the very day a balance sheet showed each partner to be a full ten thousand dollars ahead of the business, was the first day that either saw the fascinating, bewildering, adorable Leah Rashwell.

The lady entered the store at a moment when no other customers chanced to be present, and although her attire was plain and her manner unassuming, her beauty, or some peculiarity of it, affected both men powerfully. Neither partner neglected business, however, and between them they succeeded in selling the new customer several dollars' worth of the little nothings which are everything to women. Millway women usually carried their purchases home with them, that being the custom of the town, but it was a rule at Mongarew and Puttenham's to assume that any ladylike stranger was from the city, and should have city treatment. So, after payment had been made, Puttenham asked :

“ Where shall we send your purchases, madam ? ”

“ To Mrs. Rashwell, at— ”

“Your husband’s initials, please?”

The lady looked pained and embarrassed, and her lips quivered a bit as she dropped her eyes and said :

“I have no husband. Send the things to Mrs. Rashwell, at Mrs. Wickerman’s.”

“It shall be done at once, madam. Good-day, madam.”

As the lady left the store Mongarew remarked :

“That was a rather bad break you made, Putt.”

“Why, Mongie,” wailed Puttenham, who had red hair and the nerves that are supposed to accompany it, “how in creation was I to imagine her a widow? No veil—no black clothes; you don’t mean to say that you noticed any indications of widowhood about her?”

“N—n—o, but I wasn’t looking for any. All I saw was the most interesting, superb woman I ever laid eyes on. I wonder what her husband died of? If I’d been he I’d have stayed alive in spite of all the diseases and doctors in the world, with such a woman to live for. Such eyes! Such hands! Such expression.”

“Yes, yes, yes; I saw all that myself, but it doesn’t explain how I should have known that she was a widow. She’s city folks—that’s plain enough. Do you suppose city women don’t wear black when they lose their husbands?”

“There’s no telling—until the next time one of us goes on to buy goods. Still, I shouldn’t be surprised if you’ve hit it; there’s no knowing what new fancy city women may take into their changeable heads. ’Twill be bad for business, though, if any such fashion strikes our town.”

Mongarew started for the door; Puttenham followed, saying :

“So she’s stopping at Mrs. Wickerman’s! Well, the old lady deals with us, so we’ll know all about the widow before this time to-morrow. I hope the widow herself will drop in again; she’s a close buyer, as I suppose you noticed, but——”

“She may look at goods here all day long, even if she doesn’t buy a dollar’s worth,” interrupted Mongarew.

“Mongie,” said Puttenham plaintively, “I wish you wouldn’t take words out of my mouth. Don’t take up the whole doorway, either; it isn’t good shape for a man to stand with his arms akimbo, like a washerwoman. There—now I can get a look at her. Hasn’t she style, though? Walks like a queen!”

That afternoon Mongarew added a column of figures four times before he was certain as to the total; in the meantime Puttenham was so particular about getting a proper messenger to

deliver Mrs. Rashwell's purchases that old Mrs. Wickerman's servant came to the store to ask what had become of those things that were to be sent up at once.

Next day old Mrs. Wickerman came into the store. Although several other customers were present, both partners made several attempts to wait on the old lady "out of her turn," and together to learn what were her orders. To their-great relief they learned that she was in no hurry, and, indeed, preferred to wait, as she wished to speak to both of the firm about a personal matter. The other customers got things at their own prices that morning, and the store was soon cleared; then the partners invited Mrs. Wickerman into the private office in the rear of the store, gave her a very easy chair, and begged her to consider their time wholly at her service.

"Why, gentlemen," said the old lady, "'tain't a matter that I've any right to bother you about, but you're both so good-natured, and got so much head-piece, and always sympathetic like, that I thought you wouldn't mind helpin' me about her."

"Her?" echoed both partners in unison.

"Yes; I mean Leah Rashwell, poor dear, that I've known ever since she was a baby. She was in here yesterday, wasn't she? You saw her?"

"Saw her?" echoed Puttenham. "Just listen to that, Mongie!"

"Putt!" exclaimed Mongarew, severely, "keep your head on your shoulders, and don't disturb Mrs. Wickerman. Yes, ma'am, we saw her, and I wouldn't have missed the sight for——"

"Mongie," said Puttenham, in his sweetest manner, "keep your head on your shoulders, old man. Go on, please, Mrs. Wickerman."

"Yes," added Puttenham, "and tell us first how long her husband has been dead, and if not very long, why she don't wear mourning."

"He isn't dead," was the startling reply, "but he might as well be, as far as she is concerned, poor dear thing, for he is divorced."

"Then," said Mongarew, rising from his chair, and attacking the innocent circumambient air with both fists, "he ought to be dead, and I'd like to do the killing. Any man that would give any offense to that particular woman, is too mean to live!"

"You've taken the words out of my mouth once more, as you seem possessed to do, Mongie," complained Puttenham. "But

what can we do in the matter, my dear madam? Count on us for anything."

"And everything," added Mongarew.

"Thank you both, gentlemen. You see, it's this way. This is an awful town for talk about anybody that's new, and Leah's awful sensitive, and she only came here to get some rest and peace, because I nursed her through a fit of sickness once, way out East, when she was a little girl, and ever since then she's called me her second mother. Well, she's so handsome, and striking looking, that folks will begin to ask questions at once, and I ain't very good at keepin' secrets, and I thought if you two gentlemen wouldn't mind startin' the story that she's here for her health, and ain't goin' to stay long, and don't expect to be called on, it'll save her, and me, too, a heap of bother, because I don't need to tell you that the whole town will believe anything you say. 'Twon't be a lie if you say that you know all about her, because I'll tell you all you need to know."

"Tell us right away, ma'am," said Puttenham, drawing his chair close to the old lady, "and the more the better."

"Putt, do restrain yourself," said Mongarew, "and let's agree upon a plan for carrying out Mrs. Wickerman's desires. I think it would be wise to speak of her as a relation—I believe you said she calls you her second mother—a relation of one of our business friends, by whom we mean you, although of course we won't say so. If that does not satisfy public curiosity trust us to give answers which will leave people no wiser than they were."

"I always did say," replied the old lady, while gratitude and admiration beamed through her spectacles, "that you had tact enough to manage anything, Mr. Mongarew."

"But," suggested Puttenham, "to properly carry out my partner's plan, one of us at least, ought to be on speaking terms with the lady. Suppose I walk back home with you—"

"And I'll drop up there in the evening," said Mongarew, with a look such as Puttenham had never seen before on Mongarew.

"How is she fixed?" asked Puttenham. "Did the courts make the scoundrel provide for her properly?"

"No, the poor dear! She's going to try to get a school to teach as soon as she can. She had a splendid education six or eight years ago, and she thinks she's got some of it left."

"She can get a class in any school in this town, if our influence counts for anything," said Mongarew.

"But she shan't!" exclaimed Puttenham. "The idea of a—a

goddess like that wearing herself out over a lot of stupid young ones ! There must be something better for her, and there shall be ! Suppose I go up now, Mrs. Wickerman, while there's not much doing at the store ?”

Puttenham returned in half an hour, and in an extremely talkative frame of mind. A few hours later he greeted Mongarew, on that gentleman's return from an evening call, with :

“ Mongie, old man, I want to say something strictly between friends. I'm going to make love to Mrs. Rashwell, and I'm going to marry her, if she'll let me.”

“ Putt,” was the reply, “ I desire to say, also strictly between friends, that you'll do nothing of the sort, for I intend to make love to her and marry her myself, if she'll have me.”

“ Whew !” exclaimed the more excitable partner, dropping into a chair. “ I never supposed that you——”

“ You never supposed that I was a fool, did you ? I've been waiting a good many years for the one woman of all the world. Well, I've found her. But say, old man, there oughtn't to be any trouble between friends—such friends as you and I have always been. Now let's have a fair understanding. Of course the lady herself must do the deciding. Let's each do his best, and may the best man win—the one the lady thinks the best. No tricks, though, such as I've been told that the best men sometimes play in such affairs. I won't say anything but good of you ; you be square about me. Let's do the proper thing by her, too, so that nobody in town may imagine what we're up to and start a lot of gossip. That sort of thing, you know, would get to her ears sooner or later and make her miserable ; besides, it might hurt us in business. There, I've said my say ; now have yours.”

“ Mine ? Well, old man, I say—shake !”

The next day was the busiest that Mongarew and Puttenham's store had ever known, although most of the customers did more talking than buying. Every one seemed to know of the new arrival and was curious about her ; every one had heard from Mrs. Wickerman or from some one who had seen her, that Mongarew and Puttenham were the proper persons to question about Mrs. Rashwell. The partners went through the ordeal with true business tact, although they could not avoid praising the lady in a manner that made some other women go away more curious than when they came.

In the afternoon Mongarew stole time in which to take Mrs. Rashwell out for a drive ; in the evening Puttenham called to

offer the firm's influence in getting the lady a school. Day by day each partner devised some excuse to see the lady ; each was certain that he had only his business manner when other persons chanced to be present, yet a week had not gone by when at least a dozen women had told several other dozens that both Mongarew and Puttenham were dead in love with "the city widow," as Mrs. Rashwell was called. There was a perceptible change of manner in some of the feminine customers at the store, so one day Puttenham remarked, during a lull of business :

"Look here, Mongie ; between friends—of course, I wouldn't breathe it to any one else, I'm afraid you've been giving yourself away in public, somehow, regarding her. You know who I mean, of course."

"Putt," replied Mongarew, with a slight frown, "allow me to recall a bit of Scripture to your mind ; pull the beam out of your own eye before you try to pick motes out of mine. Why, you transparent infant, the way you looked at her yesterday when she came into the store to buy a spool of silk was enough to give you away to any one with eyes in his head. There were three or four other people in the store at the time, too."

"Mongie," replied Puttenham, with a pitying smile, "I wish you could have seen yourself as you passed the store with her yesterday, when you were driving. Anybody that didn't know you would have thought from the expression of your face that you were already married, and that your honeymoon was at the full, and without a cloud in front of it."

The subject of conversation was promptly changed, and each partner resolved to pull himself together, but the mischief seemed already done, so far as the general public was concerned. At least two spirited, yet patient, widows and five maidens "took away their trade" from Mongarew and Puttenham—a fact of which the partners became cognizant for themselves, by standing in their own doorway and surveying the business street at moments when not much was doing inside. Puttenham told himself that it didn't matter—he could better afford to lose fifty customers than lose Leah Rashwell, but Mongarew suddenly exclaimed :

"Between friends, old man, I think we'd both better make all possible haste in our affairs with the one woman of all the world. Whichever gets her, it will be a great thing for trade, for everybody takes a kindly interest in a bridegroom. She's no fool ; our reputations are good, and I don't doubt that old Mrs. Wickerman is singing our praises all day long."

"Ye—es, unless she smells a mouse, and doesn't approve of what we're up to. She's an old-fashioned woman; I've heard her say, more than once, that she didn't believe it right for divorced people to marry, especially if the divorce wasn't for serious cause, as she says Mrs. Rashwell's wasn't."

"Then the quicker we act, the better. I'll go up there at once, and—"

"Now, Mongie, between friends, do you think that would be fair?"

"Why not?"

"Because the man who speaks first has the best chance; women are made that way, provided that they haven't decided for themselves beforehand. There's no conceit about me, so I'm free to say that I haven't the slightest idea as to which of us she likes best. If she's like other folks, I should say we were about neck and neck in the race for her good graces, so we ought to play fair with each other at the finish."

"But how? We can't go together, and ask her which of us she'll have."

"No, but we can decide in some fair way which of us shall go first." Puttenham took a dollar from his pocket and continued: "Let's match; best two in three for the first chance to speak to her."

"Agreed," said Mongarew, taking a coin from the money-drawer and covering it with his hand. "Head or tail?"

"Head," replied Puttenham, his rosy cheeks turning pale as he spoke. Mongarew raised his hand, frowned, and said:

"Head it is. Now I match you."

Puttenham's hand trembled as he covered his coin. Mongarew's hand and coin came down like the crack of doom, as he said:

"Tail." Both hands were raised quickly; then Puttenham's cheeks regained their natural color, as Mongarew exclaimed:

"Hang it! Well, it's your first say."

Puttenham looked tenderly at his partner. There was a moment of silence, before he said:

"Between friends, Mongie—I wouldn't say it to any other man in such a case, but—let's make it best three in five."

"It's just like you, you dear old boy, but I never took advantage of you yet, and I'm not going—"

"You're not taking it; I'm giving it. Go on. Cover your coin. Head. That time you got it. Well, I feel better—for the

moment. Once again : I say tail—and I've missed it. Go ahead ! Last call ! If——”

At that very instant a stranger entered the store, a man of about the merchants' own age, and one whom both partners promptly “sized up,” and correctly, as a physician.

“ Gentlemen,” said he, “ will you kindly direct me to the house of Mrs. Wickerman ?”

“ Certainly, sir,” replied Puttenham. “ I hope the good old lady isn't ill ?”

“ Probably not, but I've been called, by a letter from her, to see a lady who is stopping with her.”

“ What ? Mrs. Rashwell ?” exclaimed Mongarew. “ Why, she was the picture of health only yesterday.”

“ Ah ! Quite likely. Still there are cases——”

“ I can show you the way from the door, sir,” said Puttenham. After acting on his suggestion, Puttenham returned, turned his coin in his hand several times, looked at it thoughtfully, and finally said :

“ Between friends, Mongie, don't you think we'd better put off the last matching until—well, it wouldn't be exactly the thing to propose to a sick woman. Women are delicate creatures, and ——”

“ You're a gentleman, Putt, and so am I. But I feel like an invalid myself.”

“ Here's another, Mongie,” sighed Puttenham.

Both were made to feel worse in a few moments, for Mrs. Wickerman's servant came into the store and said :

“ The Missus says you're both to come up to the house right away.” Then she disappeared before any question could be asked of her.

“ It's something serious !” exclaimed Puttenham. “ I'll bet it's heart disease ; they say those brilliant beauties often have it. Lock the money drawer, old man, and let's hurry along. She may want us to witness a will or something.”

As they hurried through the business street people stared at them and wanted to ask questions, but the two men were too busy with their own thoughts to pay attention to anyone. They were somewhat startled, however, on entering Mrs. Wickerman's house, to see the supposed invalid sitting beside the doctor and looking handsomer than ever.

“ Gentlemen,” said Mrs. Wickerman. “ I've been dead set on bringin' these two people together again, for they never

ought to have separated. The minister will be here in a minute, and as Leah and the doctor are the kind that hate fuss and gossip, I didn't know of any closer mouthed two people than you to call in as witnesses."

Puttenham's jaw fell, but Mongarew succeeded in saying :

"We couldn't have asked a greater honor."

"You took the words out of my mouth, Mongie," said Puttenham.

The ceremony was short; when it ended, Mrs. Wickerman said :

"If I've got a right to say anythin', and I think I have, all things bein' considered, I want to say that for a lot of reasons I think the witnesses ought to be allowed to kiss the bride."

The partners blushed furiously, but the bride reassured them with a dazzling smile and gave a cheek to each.

It was remarked afterwards by several persons that when Mongarew and Puttenham returned to their store that day they walked arm in arm, and with the air of men who owned the town. Natives hurried to the store to ask what had been going on, but the only answer they got, until the happy couple had left the town, was :

"Merely a matter of business; our signatures were wanted for a business paper."

When at last they found themselves alone, Puttenham extended his hand and said :

"Mongie, I wouldn't have thought it two or three hours ago, but we've come out of this affair exactly even."

Mongarew extended his own right hand, passed the other across his lips, and replied :

"Putt, between friends, I've no hesitation in saying that we did—God bless her."

“THE ACE OF CLUBS.”

BY GEORGE FRANCIS CURRAN.



ILL you join us in a little game of poker, Doctor, or has the moonlight on the water a greater fascination?”

“I was scarcely thinking of the moon or water either,” replied the Doctor, without glancing up to where we three stood waiting his answer.

“I was thinking of another steamboat ride I once took long years ago, but still decidedly fresh in my memory. It was on that ride I played my last game of poker, and I swore then by all I held sacred never again to play. Sit down and I’ll tell you the story.”

We sat facing the Doctor. We were all old friends of many years’ standing. Prefacing his story by opening his cigar-case and passing us each one of his fragrant weeds, the Doctor remarked :

“I am not given to story-telling, and may make a bad job of this one, but I’ll give you the facts just as they occurred, and you can fill in the details to suit yourselves. It was during the old steamboat days on the Mississippi, and I was bound from St. Louis to New Orleans. The steamer was well filled with passengers, and a right jolly crowd they formed. Poker games were running wide open, and everyone of the men dropped into some game or other during the trip. I was comparatively a young man then, and had but recently entered upon the practice of my profession. I was engaged to a handsome girl, who had moved with her parents to New Orleans. I had sold out everything I owned in St. Louis, and had ten thousand dollars in my belt, intending to use it in the purchase of a home for my future bride, in the South, where I proposed to settle. Of course, like many a young man, I thought I would try my luck at poker, and perhaps increase my little store of money, for I had noticed vast sums change hands during a game. On the second night out, I began to play. At first, I lost about fifty dollars. Then the tide seemed to change and I began to win, until six hundred dollars of other players’ money was in my hands. But I wasn’t go-

ing to be foolish; I placed a limit on my winnings and mentally decided that when I had won a thousand dollars, I would quit. The game continued with varying luck to me, sometimes winning, often losing, until, recalled to my senses, by an unusually heavy loss, I realized that not only had my winnings gone, but over eleven hundred dollars of my own money. I was dumfounded and alarmed, but I resolved to play more carefully and win back what I had lost at least, and then withdraw. It would not do to lose all that money. I felt that I would never be able to forgive myself if I stopped without making an effort to recover what I had lost, so I played on. I need not tell you how the game progressed, how I won and lost, and lost and won, never getting nearer to my original amount, however, than four hundred dollars, which point I reached once. In an effort to obtain that missing four hundred, I played heavily. I had four kings, but what are four kings when another man has four aces? Your kings might as well be deuces. And so I learned when the hand was finally called and I saw my wagers move across the table away from me, and realized that I had but seven thousand dollars of my original fortune, and that over three thousand dollars of my money was in the hands of my fellow-players. I grew reckless. I resolved to win back what I had lost, if I had to lose all I had in the attempt. The betting was fast and furious. Players from the other tables gathered around us and watched our feverish faces and glistening eyes. At length there came a jack-pot which I knew would be my last, and I meant to stay in till I won or lost all. I had the king, queen, jack and ten spot of clubs, and the king of hearts. I discarded the king of hearts and stood to fill at either end for a straight or a straight flush, with a prospect of having a club flush, so that my opportunity for securing a good hand was excellent, as I thus had five chances so to do in the draw. All hands stayed in, but I never knew how many cards they called for. I wanted the ace of clubs, for I felt that with it I could win. I was wild with excitement, and knew that my all depended on the hand I was about to play, and I meant to play it to the end. But when the dealer in discarding accidentally turned the edge of his discard, and I saw that it was the ace of clubs, my spirits sank considerably. I knew I still had four chances left, so I waited with bated breath for the betting to begin. When my one card was dealt to me, I let it lie face down on the table. I did not care to see what it was. I was going to bet my 'pile,' and that was all there was to it.

There had been five players, but after the drawing, one dropped out leaving four of us to finish the game, and we went at it as though our lives depended upon the outcome. I felt that my future life certainly did depend upon it, and with a prayer for Nettie that for her sake the Fates would smile upon me, I bet each time to the limit. I had grown cooler now, and a calmness I could not then account for, came over me. I noticed that the dealer had gold filling in one of his upper teeth, that one of the players had a small scar under his left eye, that another of the players had a stain on his vest. Everything stood out to me then with an aggravated distinctness. The player who had withdrawn from the game had picked up the deck and discards, shuffled them carelessly, and was now running his hand apparently aimlessly over the edges, while watching the betting. I knew that he was counting the cards, for presently he laid them down as if satisfied. Finally, the hand was called, and when I raised my draw card to my hand, I saw, without a tremor, that the pot was mine. As soon as he saw my hand, the dealer grew livid, and in a hoarse voice, half whisper, exclaimed: 'Where the devil did you get that card?'

"I told him that as he had dealt he ought to know. There was no use to dispute the deal in that crowd, so hastily grabbing up the deck, he ran through it, and then with a muttered curse, threw the cards on the floor, opened a fresh deck and began to shuffle it. But I withdrew from the game. I had had enough. On counting my winnings, I found that I was out only one hundred dollars on the game, and I was satisfied to let it go at that. It had been a good lesson to me, and I was willing to pay that much to have learned it."

"But what was the card you drew, Doctor?"

Reaching his hand into his waistcoat, the doctor carefully drew out a worn morocco pocketbook, and opening it, tenderly abstracted a well-preserved card which he held up by one corner for us to see in the moonlight. It was the Ace of Clubs.

THE NOVEMBER NUMBER OF The White Elephant CONTAINED THE FOLLOWING CONTRIBUTIONS:

A GAME,	Julian Hawthorne
MY STEAMSHIP POKER GAME,	A. Oakey Hall
NORRIS'S NIGHTCAP,	Edgar Failett
THE MAGIC OF EVIL. Sequel to "The Mystery of a Face,"	Lurana W. Sheldon
THE ONE NIGHT CLUB,	Marshall P. Wilder
A ROMANCE OF THE QUAYS,	Wesley Lyman
THE IRON POT.	J. Irving Alden
THE SOUVENIR CORKSCREW,	Campbell Stewart

CONTENTS OF THE OCTOBER NUMBER.	
THE GIRL WHO BROKE THE BANK AT MONTE CARLO,	Edgar Saltus
A QUIET (?) GAME,	Henry E. Dixey
A HAWK IN THE DOVE COTE,	Robert J. Burdette
A SCRIPTURE CORROBORATION,	Albert Bigelow Paine
THE AJUTANT'S INVENTION,	J. H. Connelly
BLAKEBURY TRACHES HIS WIFE THE GAME,	Thos. Q. Seabrooke
HIS LAST GAME,	Mrs. E. Burke Collins
"DEAD SOT AGIN PEENUCKLE,"	Ed. Mott
A LESSON IN POKER,	Louis F. Massen
BACKWOODS BLUFFING,	Edward Harrigan
HOW I WAS TRICKED,	Herrmann, the Prestidigitateur
"CHIPS."	William Wallace Cook

CONTENTS OF THE SEPTEMBER NUMBER.	
ALTRUISM AND CHECKERS,	Jessie Bartlett Davis
"I'LL SPRIBE 'ER!"	Marshall P. Wilder
POKER WITH THE GIRLS,	John Habberton, Author of "Helen's Babies."
THE MYSTERY OF A FACE,	Lurana W. Sheldon
THE NEW WOMAN PLAYS POKER,	Sam. W. Small, Jr.
THE ACE OF HEARTS,	James S. Burdette
TWO RESULTS IN SLEEPY HOLLOW,	Robert H. Davis
MICKY FINN TELLS FORTUNES,	Ernest Jarrold
ABBIE'S SUCCESSFUL BLUFF,	Alfred E. Pearsall
THE FATEFUL POKER HANDS,	Dr. Chas. J. Perry

CONTENTS OF THE AUGUST NUMBER.	
A POKER LESSON,	J. H. Connelly
CHIPS IN HER PURSE,	Marie Dressler
THE GAME AT THE BLACK WOLF,	M. Quad
FIFTY CHIPS APIECE,	F. R. Fast, L.L.B.
JACOB'S BLUFF,	Gus Williams
WHY JOE SWORE OFF,	Ed. Mott
HE DASSN'T TELL,	Willis P. Sweatnam
THEY CAN'T DO ME!	Jacob Hess
THE KING OF DIAMONDS.	Francis Worcester Doughty

CONTENTS OF THE JULY NUMBER.	
THE DEACON'S SIN,	John Habberton
BAFFLED BY FATE. A Tale of the Mississippi,	Col. John R. Fellows
HOW COL. SAM LOST HIS PROPERTY,	Ed. Mott
HOW JIM STAKED HIS "PARDNER" AND WHAT CAME OF IT,	Hon. Geo. R. Malby
HOW THE PARSON'S BLUFF WAS CALLED,	Lev Dockstader
PHARAOH VS. FARO,	Ernest Jarrold
THREE OF A KIND,	Chas. E. Lambert
HOW McGINTY LOST HIS Winnings,	W. J. O'Sullivan, M. D.

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